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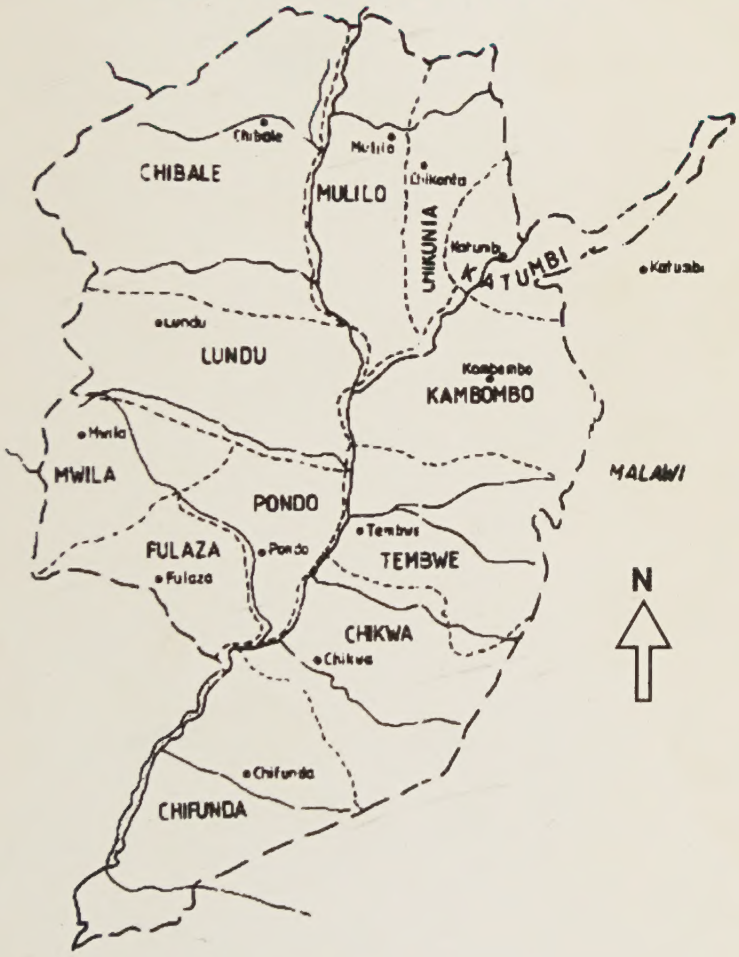
# A HISTORY OF THE TUMBUKA & SENGA IN CHAMA DISTRICT, 1470 TO 1900




Yizenge Chondoka

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# A HISTORY OF THE TUMBUKA AND SENGA IN CHAMA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA, 1470 – 1900

## Chiefdoms without a Kingdom

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**Yizenge A. Chondoka**

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to my late parents, Isaac Chondoka and Rosemary Wajisuzga Nyachilembo; my wife Chapasi and our children: Jodi, Yizenge, Thokozile, Chomola and Chapasi.

## Acknowledgements

Like the book on the Tumbuka, this is an exploratory survey and pioneering work on the history of the Senga in Chama district. This work relied heavily on oral interviews in the district. The data collected through interviews were supplemented by scanty, scattered and few archival material.

I got a lot of encouragement from Dr Effron Lungu, Department of Language and Social Sciences, University of Zambia. I got useful data on the Kwenje ceremony from Davies Kaluba, a teacher of history at Chitulika High School in Mpika, Annie Nkoma, Assistant Director of Works, Chama District Council and Matthews Mkandawire, Chimang'anga village, Chief Chikwa. Detailed information on Kwenje came from the following people who had at one time participated in the ceremony: Mr Brevious Bota, Lusaka; Suzgo L.B. Chavula, a student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) in 2000, and Benson Mkandabile, a student at UNZA in 2006. I am thankful to them for the data.

Many people helped me in a number of ways during the fieldwork in 1990. Some of the respondents that were interviewed are listed under the subtitle 'Oral Interviews' in the Bibliography. However, many more are not listed here. To all of you I say thank you very much for your wonderful assistance.

I register my sincere thanks to Mr Joseph Chalila and Ms Alice Nsamwa Nguluwe cartographers in the Department of Geography, University of Zambia for preparing all the maps. Finally, I sincerely thank Mr Nason Tembo for the graphic work and typesetting of the book. He worked tirelessly to complete the work in a record time.

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# Preface

The basic fact of history is that the Bisa from Mwata Yamvo Empire came and occupied Chamanyavyose chiefdom from 1780. They did not fight with the Tumbuka under Chamanyavyose. The Bisa 'conquered' the Tumbuka chiefdom by trickery methods. Thereafter, the Bisa who were *renamed* Senga by the *indigenous* Tumbuka established Senga chiefdoms in the territory of chief Chamanyavyose. Leadership changed hands, from the Tumbuka to the Senga. The Senga authorities have been ruling the indigenous Tumbuka from about 1785. The relationship that has developed between the two groups since then is excellent and the rulers have continued receiving great respect from both the Senga and the Tumbuka in the district.

Since the Senga came without many women, they quickly married the local Tumbuka women. That was the beginning of the loss of much of their mother tongue, Chi-Bisa language that is very similar to Chi-Bemba language. They also quickly adopted many aspects of the Tumbuka culture. Interestingly enough, the Senga especially those under Chibesa Kambombo did not continue with their custom of matrilineality, the same custom that was being practiced by the local people they found in the Luangwa valley. For strategic reasons however, they started following a patrilineal system of ascendance to political power.

This work depended heavily on oral interviews to reconstruct the histories of the Tumbuka and the Senga in Chama district. Those interviewed included people from Zambia and Malawi. Various documents were also used to cross-check and supplement oral sources. Books by colonial administrators on the Senga in Chama district were extremely useful for this book. Unfortunately, post-colonial district administrators are not writing the histories of the people where they are working. Historians are also not writing the histories of small ethnic groups. There is danger of losing the histories of these ethnic groups. It was for this reason among other reasons that I prepared the history of the Senga. The revised edition of this book will contain Family trees of all the chiefs in the district.

This work is an exploratory and pioneering short history of the Senga. Together we can improve it. Any constructive suggestions to improve this work please send it to the author, History Department, University of Zambia, P.O.Box 32379, Lusaka, Zambia. You can also send your constructive contributions directly to the author, on telephone numbers: 099-715018 / 1-255511 / 1-250371 and E-mail: yizengechondoka@yahoo.com /academicpres@zamtel.zm I will appreciate your contributions very much.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE SENGA HISTORY

A number of early British colonial officials, European travellers and adventurers and scholars who wrote on the Senga that live in Chama district faced two problems. First, they did not distinguish between the Senga in Luangwa North and the Nsenga in Luangwa South. The second problem was that the British colonial officials in charge of the Senga in Luangwa North interviewed only the members of the Senga ruling class, leaving the political authorities of the natives, the Tumbuka. Out of this situation came another more serious problem for the historiography of the Senga history. Those who wrote on the Senga for the first time wrote as if the Senga were the indigenous people in the present Chama district. What they wrote is what the subsequent scholars used to expand their writings on the Senga. The error was made and nobody ever corrected it until now. Thus, the history of the Tumbuka in Luangwa North prior to the Senga intrusion in Luangwa valley was ignored, obscured or flatly forgotten. Whether this was by design or by mistake is difficult to accept.

When the colonial officials began writing the history of the Senga in the second decade of the 20th century, they chose to interview members of the Senga ruling class. Why they did not ask the Senga chiefs questions on who they found before they came to this territory is also difficult to understand especially that most colonial officers had some good education. As one would expect, the Senga traditional authorities did all they could to conceal the history of the Tumbuka they found in the current Chama district, historically called Chamanyavyose chiefdom under chief Chamanyavyose (in short, Chama). It is for this reason that the district's name is Chama. Today, even the native Tumbuka families living peacefully together with the Senga families in Chama district do not know their own histories but are very knowledgeable about the short history of the Senga, originally called Bisa.

The historiography of the Senga history was fundamentally shaped by two people, namely, Poole and Miracle. No colonial official wrote more clearly and extensively on the history of the Senga than Lane Edward Humphrey Poole. He was Lundazi District Native Commissioner from 1918 to 1924. The current Chama district, the home for the demographically fewer Senga was until 1967 part of the large Lundazi district. Poole did extensive oral research among the Senga [only] in the district and by 1933 his book on the history of the Senga was completed. First edition of his book was published in 1933 while the second edition was published in 1936. That was the first book on the history of the Senga, not Nsenga. [2]

---

[1] This is the focus of chapter one of this book. It explains the history of the Tumbuka in Luangwa valley before the arrival of the Bisa in 1780.

[2] Lane Edward Humphrey Poole, *The Native Tribes of the Eastern province of Northern Rhodesia (Notes on their Migrations and History)* (Livingstone: Government Printer, First edition, 1933 [Second edition, Lusaka 1936] ). Also read, Lane E.H. Poole, 'The Luangwa valley in 1918', *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 2, 3 (1956).

Poole, being the pioneer on the history of the Senga raised a number of issues. He convincingly concluded that in actual fact, the Senga were by origin 'properly Wisa (*sic*).'[3] He also very clearly explained the Senga migrations from the Luba kingdom of the vast Mwata Yamvo Empire to Chama district. It was also Poole who stated that the Mulopwe Mphalakasanga so prominent in the Senga traditions was in fact either a senior leader of the Senga from Mwata Yamvo Empire or was just a Bisa chief that welcomed the Senga and allowed them to stay at Mphalakasanga hill in his chiefdom.

As was the case with many early colonial officials, by ignoring to interview the natives of Luangwa North, the Tumbuka, Poole, the self-imposed historian wrote a subjective and imbalanced history of the Senga.

Following the footsteps of Poole, Marvin P. Miracle provided much data on the Senga migration from Mwata Yamvo and their trading activities after settling in Luangwa North. He also wrote on the trading activities of the Nsenga of Luangwa South without telling his readers the history of the Nsenga. His work on the migration of the Senga is basically a replica of Poole's work.[4] The only new material on the Senga migration is his detailed work on their crossing of Luapula River and their stay in chief Kopa's territory. Additionally, his explanation about Mulopwe Mphalakasanga differs from that of Poole. He states that Mulopwe was in fact an advisor to Chibesa the group leader of the Senga and that after crossing Luangwa River, this group built a village where Mulopwe remained.

The history of the Senga attracted many other colonial officials, ordinary travellers and scholars. Apart from Brelsford who produced excellent details on the histories of many ethnic groups in Zambia including the Senga, Moffat, Coxhead, Fraser, Young, Whiteley, Gouldsbury and Sheane, Colson and Gluckman, Langworthy and Macpherson treated the Senga marginally focusing on their trading activities with their neighbours.[5] Most of these people did desk research on the Senga relying heavily on the work by Poole. However, it was Macpherson who carried out a number of in-depth group interviews at a seminar-workshop he organized in 1972 at Lundazi for

---

[3] Poole, *The Native Tribes*, p. 21. This was also confirmed by Kamulibwe who became Tembwe in about 1880 and died in 1922 and Mwininkhonde who became Kambombo in 1918.

[4] For details read, Marvin P. Miracle, 'Ivory Trade and the Migration of the Northern Rhodesia Senga', *Chaiers d'Etudes Africanes*, 11, 4 (1963), 424–34 and his other article, ' Aboriginal Trade among the Senga and Nsenga of Northern Rhodesia', *Ethnology*, 1,2 (April 1962), 212–22.

[5] W.V. Brelsford, *The Tribes of Zambia* (Lusaka: Government Printer,1956). Very useful book on the early histories of various ethnic groups in Zambia, Senga and Nsenga included; Thomson J. Moffat, *Memorandum on the Native Tribes and Tribal Areas of Northern Rhodesia* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1934); J.C.C. Coxhead, *The native Tribes of North-Eastern Rhodesia. Occasional Paper of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.(London: R.A.I., 1914), useful on the Senga; Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive people. Sixteen years' work among the warlike tribe of the Ngoni and the Senga and Tumbuka peoples of Central Africa* (London: Seeley, Service and Co. Ltd, 1914); Cullen T. Young, *Notes on the History of te Tumbuka-Kamanga peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1932) and his other work 'The 'Henga' people in Northern nyasaland', *The Nyasaland Journal*, 5, 1 (January, 1952); Wilfred Whiteley, *Bemba and related peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (London: International African Institute, 1951); Cullen Gouldsbury and Hubert Sheane, *The Graet Plateau of Northen Rhodesia. Being some Impressions of the Tanganyika Plateau* (London: Edward Arnold, 1911); Elizabeth Colson and Max Gluckman (eds.), *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959); Harry W. Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890. Aspects of Pre-colonial history* (London: Longman, 1972); Fergus Macpherson, *Seminar-Workshop on Oral Records of Local History held at Lundazi, 24th - 25th June 1972* (Lusaka: Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, 1973).

the elders in the then Lundazi district that revealed that the Senga [and Tumbuka] accepted colonial rule because it wiped out slave trade and consequently brought peace in Luangwa valley in the 1890s. Like Poole, what all these writers did not realize was that the people they called Senga were in fact the Tumbuka with a mixture of a small proportion of the Senga.

For over fifty years after Poole's work a new group of scholars on Chama district from the University of Zambia emerged. Their works were on socio-economic studies of the district. The major ones included studies by Tembo, Kalyalya, Van Spengen and Chondoka.[6] With the exception of Chondoka, the rest focused their studies on the socio-economic issues in the district. In addition to economic issues, Chondoka provided a complete subjective history of the Senga and Tumbuka people who inhabit the district. He undertook extensive oral interviews in the district with both Senga and Tumbuka local political authorities and ordinary citizens in the seven Senga chiefdoms under senior chief Kambombo. Field data were suplemented by archival sources including the documents mentioned above.

Chondoka's research on the history of the people in Luangwa North has fundamentally changed the historiography of this area. He has provided an accurate picture of the two histories of the people of this valley. First, he has provided the history of the Tumbuka in Luangwa valley before the arrival of the Bisa (Senga) in 1780. He has also discussed the circumstances that led to domination of the native Tumbuka by the Bisa, who entered their chiefdom, Chamanyavyose, from the west.

The studies discussed above have not yet solved the problem of the origin of the Nsenga, the main southern neighbours of the Senga. Poole provided what up to now looks like a satisfactory explanation on the unitary origin of the Senga-Nsenga that reveals blood relationship between the original migrants to Luangwa North (the Senga) and those that went and settled in Luangwa South (the Nsenga). The problem with Poole's explanation has to do with the name Senga. This name was given to the Chibesa Bisa group after they entered and settled in the Tumbuka Chamanyavyose chiefdom and not before. Thus, the Mundikula Bisa's segment of Chibesa Bisa group that is said to have gone and settled in the present Petauke district could not have used the name Senga for themselves. They did not know this name. In fact, among the Nsenga in Petauke, the name Nsenga has no satisfactory meaning or interpretation. The Nsenga traditions state that the name is from the name of the native species of cotton that was grown for sale on barter system to the neighbours. Our future reseach should therefore focus on establishing whether there is a historical relationship between the Senga and the Nsenga in Zambia.

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[6] Christopher W. Tembo, "The establishment and Development of Peasant Farming Schemes in the Eastern Province of Zambia: A Case study of Lundazi District, 1954 –1976", M.A. Thesis, University of Zambia, 1988; Denny Hamachila Kalyalya, "The Role of Transport and Communications in Regional Economic Development: The Case of Chama and Lundazi Districts of eastern Province", M.A. Thesis, University of Zambia, 1982; W. Van Spengen, 'Rural Development in the Northern Luangwa valley: A micro-regional synthesis', *Zambia Geographical Journal,* 31-32 (1976-77), 11-32; Yizenge A. Chondoka, 'Economy and Society in North-eastern Rhodesia up to 1945', Ackson Kanduza (ed.), *Socio-Economic Change in eastern Zambia. Pre-colonial to te 1980s* (Lusaka: Historical Association of Zambia, 1992) plus this book on the history of the Senga.

## CHAPTER TWO

# CHAMANYAVYOSE CHIEFDOM BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE BISA, 1470 - 1780

### ORIGIN OF CHAMANYAVYOSE KINGDOM

*Nyanjagha* Chamanyavyose (*the one who knows everything*, popularly known as Chama)[7] was one of M'nyanjagha Longwe's children. He broke off from his father just before his father became the First M'nyanjagha of the Tumbuka kingdom. Chamanyavyose broke-off from his father and together with his supporters that included his mother and members of the clan migrated westward. He broke away on the grounds that his father was ill-treating his mother. He was also looking for a better place where to settle, away from *Kacheche*, the name for the place where his father lived before he broke away.

On their migration westward, Chamanyavyose and his team crossed many hills before reaching the famous Nyika plateau. From there, the group descended to the Luangwa valley. After a short time in the valley, the group went north as far as Kamphumbu, in the present northern province of Zambia. It is here where some of his subordinates adopted the name *Katyetye* of the royalty in Kamphumbu. For some political reasons the group abandoned chief Katyetye they found in Kamphumbu and decided to come back to the Luangwa valley. With him were important heads of the clans including the notable Mungwalala, Mungulube, Nchuka, Chikontha, Chizembe and Chilumanga. None of the people in Chamanyavyose's group settled on the westbank of Luangwa River. All of them settled in the areas east of the river.

After crossing Luangwa River, the Chikontha division of the Nyimbili (Kubona) clan in the group decided to settle in a large and productive valley with plenty of game. Chikontha was the most northern area in Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. Some of Chamanyavyose's people settled southeast of Chikonta in the middle Luwumbu River valley in an area commonly known today as Sitwe. The Nchuka group of the Chilembo clan decided to settle in the upper Luwumbu River. The two subchiefs, Chikontha and Nchuka, shared the boundary at Mphemba in Muyombe.

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[7] As earlier stated, Chamanyavyose was a subking to M'nyanjagha Longwe. He occupied the current Chama district long before the Senga arrived there. Technically, the district's correct full name is supposed to be *Chamanyavyose District* not just *Chama* District. I hope the relevant authorities will read this book and change the name accordingly in the near future. Much of the information on this chieftaincy came from the following sources: Headman Kabanda [over 60 years] Chama Boma, Chief Kambombo. Interviewed on 28th June 1990; Headman Kanyerere [over 70 years], Kanyerere village, Chief Kambombo. Interviewed in November 1998; Zacharia Bota, 82 years. Chama village, Chief Kambombo. Interviewed on 6th August 1998.

Chamanyavyose and the remainder of his group went south, taking a route that was parallel to the mountains on the east. After travelling for many days they came to rest at a river. As usual, while there, his men were actively engaged in hunting. One evening, they brought a live dove from their hunting expedition and kept it in a cage for the night so that the following morning they could prepare it for their subking. For it not to fly-off, its wings were broken but its legs were not. This way, it was able to move within the cage but could not fly-off. At night the bird escaped through an opening in the cage. The following morning they found the cage empty, the dove had escaped. They quickly mounted an intensive search for the bird on the nearby stream. They kept on asking and complaining: Where is the bird? *Kalinku kayuni?* After some time, they saw it in the reeds on the bank of the stream. They chased it but the bird went into the reeds and disappeared. From that time the unnamed river was named *Kalinku* (*where is it*?) *River*, after the dove that disappeared in the reeds on the river. It seems the Chamanyavyose group considered the loss of the dove as bad omen for them. For this reason, they left the place and continued their search for a good area in which to settle. They went further south to Kamphemba River [a corruption of Kapemba] and decided to settle on its upper part where there was plenty of water and very good soils. Chamanyavyose made this his headquarters. He ruled the entire chiefdom from here. His territory extended westward up to Luangwa River, eastward bordering with the other chiefdoms and on the southern part the kingdom stretched up to Luambe. From Luambe the chiefdom extended eastward into the Mphamba chiefdom, currently part of Lundazi district.[8]

Chamanyavyose was a very good leader who was known for being fair in his judgement and was also a very good hunter of big animals, especially elephants. His praise name was and still is: *Botawota Nyanjagha Musolomoka kuchanya Chibinimbi thepwele kavula mpande wanangwa ntha wovula.* Translated as: *Botawota Nyanjagha Musolomoka Chibinimbi thepwele, the one who takes off his bangle of leadership, yet it is taboo to take off the bangle of leadership.*

The meaning of 'dropping from heaven' was in relation to the way he travelled across the mountains, the problems he faced before he finally settled in the Luangwa valley. His official territorial or chiefdom throne [royal seat] was a compartment about two metres high above the ground supported by strong poles from the *Mubanga* tree. The top was made of the elephant tusks. There were always two men seated under the throne each facing in the opposite direction. The throne was *like* a small *upstairs compartment* (*Gongwe*). The custom was that every subject coming close to the throne had to kneel down before the *Nyanjagha* Chamanyavyose in the throne. Those passing near the throne had to kneel down some distance away from him before continuing with their journey. Nyanjagha Chamanyavyose's chiefly regalia comprised a *Crown* of the leopard skin and a stick in his hand. He was only spoken to through his Prime Minister (Kazembe) or his *senior* advisor, (*Yinthini*), not directly. The second in power

[8]The Portuguese expedition to the King of the Lunda Kazembe in Luapula valley under Dr de Lacerda in 1798 found the Tumbuka living east of Luangwa River at Luambe. For details on this read, Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, p. 21.

to Chamanyavyose was Mungwalala Kaleya Kazilondo Mukhala pa banthu. His throne was a very high stool. Two men were always seated under the throne each facing in the opposite direction.

**Figure 1. Picture of Nyanjagha Chamanyavyose (Zakariah Bota) descended from the first Camanyavyose**

Chief Chamanyavyose ruled his chiefdom through his subchiefs. Many of them were either his relatives or notable clan leaders in the group he came with from his father. These were given territories to rule on his behalf and were spread to cover his entire chiefdom. They paid him tributes in goods annually and in labour when required. In times of troubles in the chiefdom, such as times when there were people-eating animals, each subchief offered his *Bavyaka* (soldiers) to help the chief kill the beasts wherever they were terrorising the people in the chiefdom.

## EXPANSION OF CHAMANYAVYOSE CHIEFDOM, 1470 - 1500

The movement of chief Chamanyavyose with his people from M'nyanjagha Longwe's territory to Luangwa valley and Kamphumbu where he stayed for a short time must have taken about five years. His trip back to the Luangwa valley and settling down must also have taken five years before embarking on the expansion programme. This is why we put the date 1470 as the time when the expansion of the chiefdom began. Fifteen years later, the expansion programme was completed.[9]

As earlier stated, the capital (commonly known as *Musumba*) of the Chamanyavyose's chiefdom was Chamanyavyose village at the present Chama Boma. From here chief Chamanyavyose Botawota was able to expand his chiefdom to as far south as Luambe, on Lumimba River south of the present chief Chifunda and as far north as the present

[9] This information was from Headman Kabanda, interviewed in 1990 at Chama Boma. He was not sure of the dates but said that the expansion took about 15 years before the subchiefs settled down in their respective territories. This is what he was told by his grandfather.

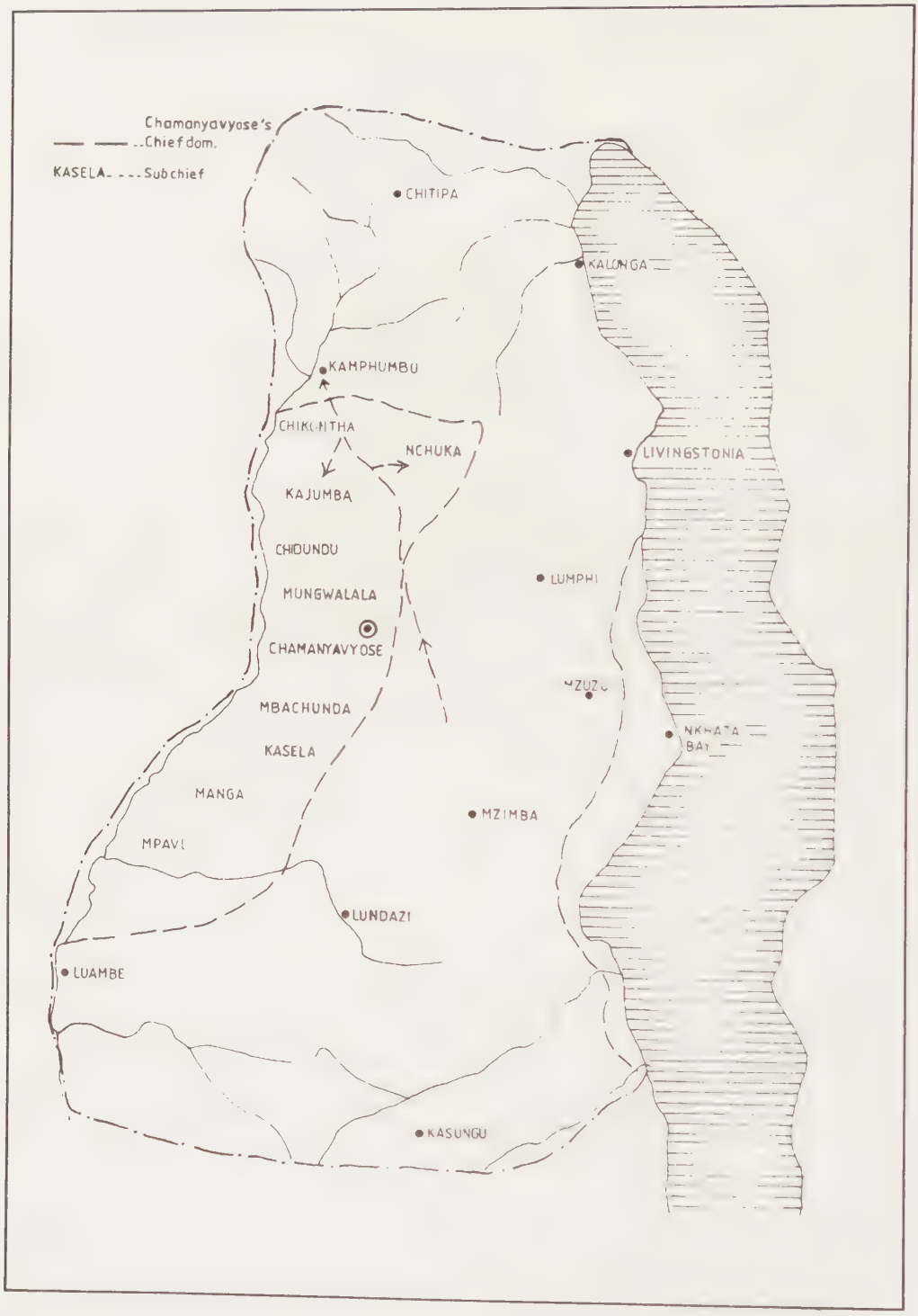
chief Muyombe. His eastern border followed the hills from his subchief Nchuka in the north to chief Mphamba in the south. The expansion of the chiefdom was not by military campaigns but by mutual incorporation of the few people, most likely the remnants of the Saan, he found in the area into his chiefdom. Oral sources from the Tumbuka of this area speak of no wars with any people other than the Bemba and Ngoni raids in the 19th century.[10]

While Chikontha and his subordinates namely, Chikondo, Kawozga and Muzambwe controlled northwestern part of Chamanyavyose's chiefdom, Nchuka and his subordinates controlled the northeastern part of the chiefdom bordering chief Mowa territory. Mungwalala the second in command with subordinates Mphima-Kamimbe and Mungulube controlled the central area. Chidundu was in charge of the territory north of Mngwalala's area up to Luangwa River and shared the border with Chikontha, Nchuka and Mowa. Kajumba who died in 1923 was Chidundu's grandson.

On the southern region of the chiefdom Mbachunda controlled the territory south of Chamanyavyose's headquarters. South of these areas the territory was under Muzgatama, Manga, Kasela, Kabanjila and Mpamvi, the southernmost subchief bordering with chief Mphamba in the present Lundazi district. Chamanyavyose's brothers namely, Chiyunga, Chiti, Katongomala, Jalila and Kapemba on the eastern side of the hills frequently visited him and vice versa. They were, after all, people and rulers from the same family.[11]

[10]Interviews with Headman Kabanda, Chama Boma, 1990.

[11]Some of this data on chief Chamanyavyose and his subchiefs that the Senga found in 1780 come from work done by Suzgo L.B.Chavula, a Second Year student in 2000 at the University of Zambia School of Education. The data were for his Project course, RS 202: Indigenous Religions in Central Africa. In 2000 he intervied Senior Chief Kambombo and a number of headmen in his chiefdom.




Map 1. *Chamanyvyose's route from M'nyanjagha's headquarters to Kamphumbu and his new chiefdom, 1470.*

As it has been shown in the preceding paragraphs, the founder of the Tumbuka chiefdom in the Luangwa valley was Nyanjagha Chamanyavyose Botawota. This chief was remembered by all informants interviewed in the field as the founder chief. However, all informants interviewed in the field did not know by name subsequent chiefs of the Chamanyavyose chiefdom from the *Founder Chief* to the time of the arrival of the Biza (Senga). Thus, the one we call the second chief in the Chamnyavyose Family Tree is not really the *serially* second chief but the second one that the *informants* in the field could *remember*. Therefore, having said this, the one we call the second chief was actually Chamanyavyose Fwasani Chasweka Musolomoka Kuchanya Botawota (Bota). This is the one that the Biza found in the Luangwa valley in 1780. He was also known as Chamanyavyose Musolomoka *Mutayachalo* because he was the one who lost the chiefdom to the Senga.

Chamanyavyose Musolomoka Mutayachalo had many children but the informants could only remember seven of them. These were: Zgala, also known as *Kanabeza* (a name given to him by the Senga) a corruption of Kanabesa, Kabanda, Kabende (also known as *Musovyadimba*), Lukombozi, Chote, Kazumba and a beautiful daughter Mulolwa. Kanabeza tookover leadership from his father 'chief' Chamanyvyose Mutayachalo in about 1800. He became the Third Chamanyavyose. The table below shows a Family Tree of the Chamanyavyose chiefs beginning with the Founder Chamanyavyose from about 1460 to 2000.[12]

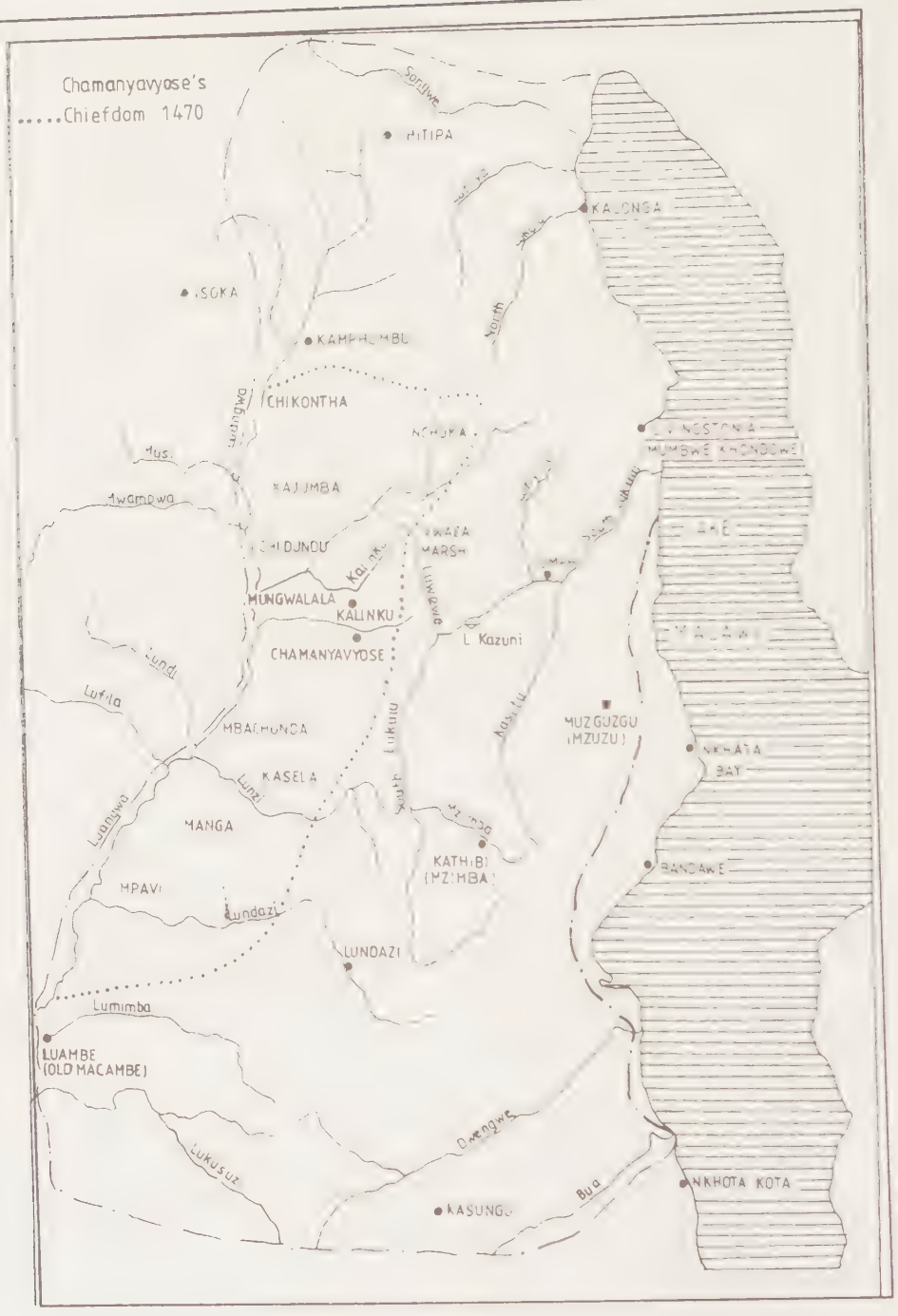
**Rulers of Chamanyavyose Chiefdom**

From about 1470: Nyanjagha Chamanyavyose Botawota
:Many chiefs not remembered by the informants.

From 1780 to 1800: Fwasani Chasweka Musolomoka Botawota (Bota) (Also known as Mutayachalo Botawota (*he lost the chiefdom to the Senga*)

From 1800: *Kanabeza* Musolomoka Bota
:Mutule Bota
:Mulyawima (son of Chakola) [Nephew]
:Chote Bota
: Zelu (son of Mpeti) [Nephew]
:Chizowe Bota
:Chaipa Bota
:Chenyentha (Salu)
:Chafumilankhu, son of Kadongo (Phiri) [Nephew]
:Vwalamukwamba (Katyetye)

[12]Note that the name *Chama* is now being used as if this was the original *title* of a chief. It was the *name* of the leader of the group, Chamanyavyose of the Botawota clan. His title was *Nyanjagha*, the subking.




Map. 2 *Position of Chamanyavyose chiefdom in the Tumbuka kingdom, 1470*

Early August 1964: Davide Mukondo Mulindanyifwa Bota

From September 1964: Chakujuma mung'ombwa Bota
:Mateyo Lindiladongo (Katyetye)
:January Chisulo (Katyetye)

1997 to date (2002): Zakaria Chidosa Bota

Of the Chamanyavyose chiefs above, Mulyawima, Zelu and Chafumilankhu were nephev
Chamanyavyose Davide Mukondo was killed during the Lenshina Uprising against t
Zambian government early August 1964.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE CHIBESA BISA GROUP: FROM MWATA YAMVO TO CHIEF CHIBESAKUNDA

Evidence provided by the Senga oral sources leaves no doubt as to where they came from. They all agree that they came from the watershed of Luapula-Lualaba Rivers in the famous Luba-Lunda Empire under the great King Mwata Yamvo. They are among the many offshoots of the Luba ethnic groups. Field research revealed that many Senga elders do not remember the Lunda Empire but freely talk about the Luba Empire where they were under the leadership of Mulopwe Mphalakasanga ya Uluba, probably a sub-King in the kingdom.[13]

Senga oral sources do not also provide a strong reason for leaving Mwata Yamvo's kingdom. But they agree that they ran away from their original place in the Luba kingdom because they objected to the arduous labour of clearing the king's gardens and keeping them free of weeds. This was done by making small conical mounds [vikuse or visonyo] by putting together weeds or other unwanted materials in the cleared parts of the gardens. Probably, there were more pressing issues than this. It could have been a dispute over arable land or just the desire to expand eastward and acquire more land. Whatever the real reasons, this group that was Bisa by origin left Luba-Lunda kingdom sometime before 1740.[14] Senga oral records state that on their primary migration from the Luba kingdom, the Chibesa Bisa group, the only known 'Senga group' left with very few women.[15] The group was led by Chibesa Kambombo and assisted by his brother Kamphonje and his nephew Kamphata.

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[13] E.H. Lane Poole was a District Commissioner of Lundazi district from 1920. While in the district the intervied Mwinenkonde who became Kambombo in 1918, Ng'anjo Chiwato his headman and one of the oldest people in his chiefdom, and Kamulibwe who was chief Tembwe from about 1880 to 1922. His book was written in 1933 and the first edition was published in 1936 under the title of. *The Native of the Eastern Province of Northern Rhodesia (Notes on their Migrations and History)* Lusaka: Government Printer, 1936. On page 21 he states that the Senga ethnic group 'was properly Wisa'. One other story is that Mulopwe was a Bisa chief the Senga stayed with on their journey. They found him at Mpalakasanga Hill. Another story says that Mulopwe was a senior leader of the Senga from Mwata Yamvo's kingdom. The name Mulopwe is also used as a title for addressing people to whom it is desired to show special respect.

[14] For more details on the migration of the Senga see Poole, *Native Tribes of Eastern Province*, chapter 2 and Marvin P. Miracle, 'Ivory Trade and the Migrations of Northern Rhodesian Senga' in *Cahiers D'Etudes Africaines*, 11, 3 (1963), 424-34. According to the work by Father Labreque cited in Miracle's article on page 431, the Senga left Mwata Yamvo kingdom before the Bisa and Bemba. After Travelling for a short distance Chibeza's sister fail ill and this forced them to stay in that place for a while. His sister died. When they resumed their journey they found that the Bisa and Bemba who they left behind were ahead of them. The Senga had therefore to pass through Bemba's and Bisa's countries on their way east.

[15] Interview with Headman Kabanda, chief Kambombo, at Chama in June 1990.

The date 1740 is very important in our understanding of the period when the Senga migration might have commenced. We know that the Lunda Kazembe under Kanyembo crossed Luapula River in 1740, and immediately began conquering the local people of Luapula valley and the neighbouring areas. After this date no other group is known to have crossed Luapula River going eastward or anywhere passing through Lunda Kazembe's kingdom.

The Senga are Bisa by origin. When they broke-off from the Luba kingdom of the large Mwata Yamvo Empire, they were led by Chibesa Kambombo. This Chibesa Bisa group left Luba kingdom before the Bemba and the large group of the Bisa left. However, for some reasons, the Bemba and the large Bisa group came and by-passed them.[16] These crossed the Luapula River before the Chibesa Bisa group. Whiteley also states that the Bemba were the first to cross Luapula River and that they were followed by the Bisa. What we do not know and Senga oral sources are silent, is whether the Chibesa Bisa group crossed the river together with the large Bisa group or not.[17] By 1650, the Bemba and the large Bisa group were already in Mpika district.[18]

After crossing the Luapula River, the Chibesa Bisa group passed through Luena Flats before reaching chief Chungu's territory where they stayed for sometime. That could have been months or years. From chief Chungu's territory, Chibesa Bisa group went to chief Matipa's chiefdom. Here, they also stayed for sometime. After spending many years wandering on the northern, eastern and southeastern fringes of lake Bangweulu under the protection of chiefs Chungu and Matipa, probably Bisa chiefs, the Chibesa Bisa group proceeded south of lake Bangweulu. They reached chief Kopa's area where they also stayed for sometime. On leaving his territory,[19] chief Kopa gave Chibesa a young girl, Mwali, as his wife.[20] The offering of a girl to the group leader is a confirmation that Chibesa Bisa's group had very few women or had no women at all. Kopa also gave the Chibesa Bisa group a guide named Chimunelo to take them to the next chiefdom, that of chief Mukungule.

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[16] For details of the reasons for their delay read footnote 2 above.

[17] Wilfred Whiteley,

*Bemba and Related peoples of Northern Rhodesia*

(London: International African Institute, 1951), p. 70. According to Whiteley, the Bemba crossed first, then the Bisa before Lunda Kazembe in 1741. If this is correct then the Senga as a group crossed after or with the Bisa but before the Lunda Kazembe.

[18] The Bemba crossed Luapula River many years before the Lunda Kazembe did. They may have been the first large group to cross the river. According to Harry W. Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890: Aspects of Pre-colonial History* (London: 1972), p. 44; the Bemba were already in Mpika district by 1650.

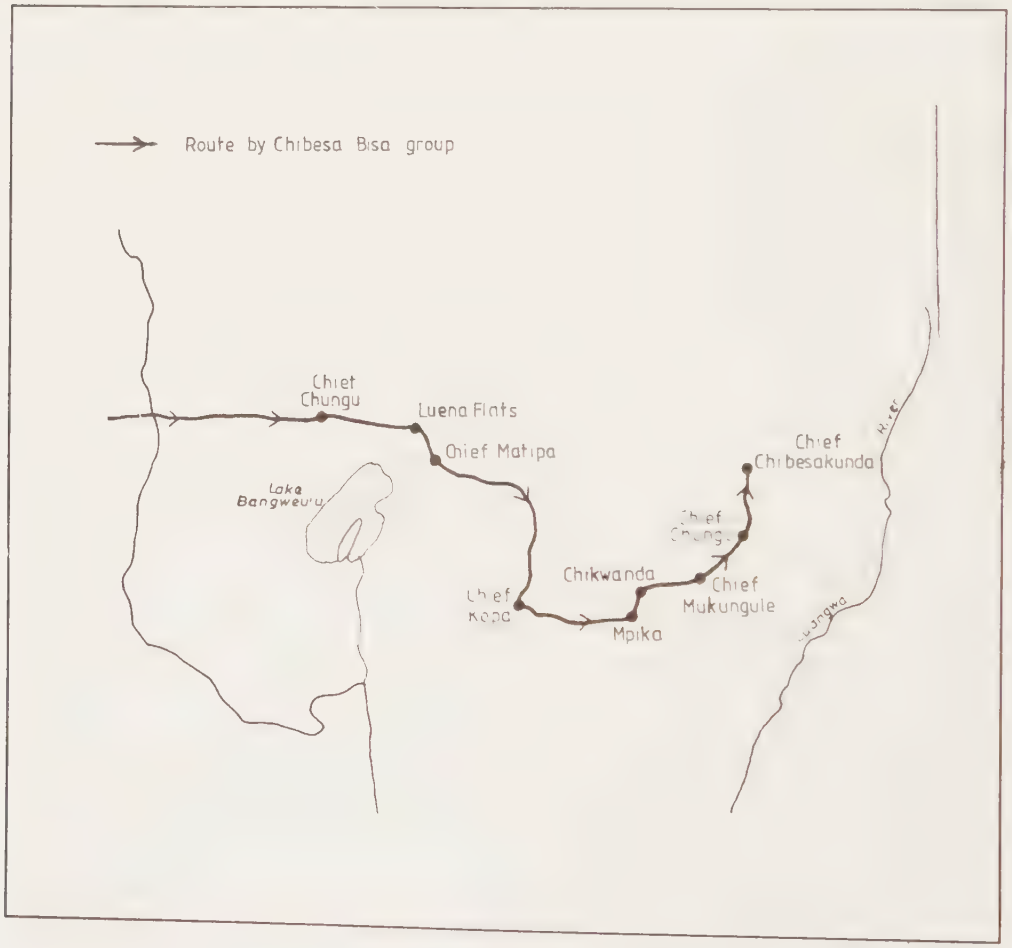
[19] Miracle, 'Ivory Trade and Migration...', p. 432. Miracle says that 'the Senga men were skilful dancers whose ability excited the jealousy of Kopa's me

n: the latter charged the Senga with adultery, and Kopa reportedly held court over the matter, but judged the Senga innocent. Nevertheless the Senga leaders decided it was less than prudent to remain after the incident and again were on their way.

[20] In Ci-Tumbuka, the term *Mwali* means a 'matured' woman or a marriageable woman. We do not know if Mwali was the name of the girl or it is a Bisa term that has different meaning from the

It was in chief Mukungule's chiefdom that Chibesa Bisa's group settled for few years before proceeding to another chiefdom, that of chief Chibesakunda. It was also in chief Mukungule's area that one segment of Chibesa Bisa's group remained. The group that remained here came to be known later as the Chifunda group. This group left Mukungule's territory to settle in their present chiefdom. Senga oral sources are silent on the reasons why this group remained in chief Mukungule's territory. The rest of the Chibesa Bisa's group went north to chief Chibesakunda, where they stayed for a few years proceeding east beyond Luangwa River. It was also in chief Chibesakunda's area that the final split of the group took place in 1780. The Chikwa segment of the Chibesa Bisa group broke-off and went southwest. The details of the two 'splinter' segments are provided in the subsequent chapters. See Maps 3 and 4.

Chief Chibesakunda features more prominently in the Senga oral traditions than any other Bisa chief. For this reason, we can assume that he must have been a very good chief and was more influential in their lives than any other Bisa chief.




Map 3. *The route taken by the Chibesa Bisa group from Luba kingdom in Mwata Yamvo Empire to chief Chibesakunda*

## CHAPTER FOUR

# ARRIVAL OF THE BISA IN CHAMANYAVYOSE CHIEFDOM

The Bisa in the present Mpika district, south of the Bembaland came under constant attacks from the Bemba warriors from the 18th century. The Chibesa Bisa group did experience some of these attacks. Although the Senga do not provide good reasons for leaving the Bisa chiefdoms where they stayed very well indeed for sometime, we now know that Bemba attacks could have been one of the reasons for leaving the area. Somehow, the physical barrier between Mpika and Chinsali, and Chamanyavyose chiefdom in the Luangwa valley saved the Tumbuka from such Bemba attacks. It was for this reason that long before the arrival of the Chibesa Bisa group in Chamanyavyose chiefdom, the Tumbuka named the physical barrier as *Muchinga ba Bemba* (that which blocks the Bemba [warriors]) escarpment, commonly known as Muchinga Escarpment.

The story of the arrival of the Chibesa Bisa group in Chamanyavyose chiefdom is very interesting indeed. After travelling for some distance eastward and outside Chibesakunda's chiefdom but before Luangwa River, at Ponombwe Hill, Kamphonje decided to settle there letting the rest to continue. This is what became the Lundu dividion of the Chibesa Bisa group. The rest continued eastward led by Chibesa Kambombo, who later on the Tumbuka failed to correctly pronounce his name, and corrupted it to Chibeza with a 'z' and not the original 's'. The name Bisa was also corruptly called Biza with a 'z' and not the original 's'. The remaining group under Chibeza crossed Luangwa River in 1780. After crossing the river, they travelled for a short distance east of the river and stopped at a lagoon, a place later to be known as Chibeza's or Kambombo's pool. However, in his article on the Senga, Miracle stated that a village was built and some people remained at this spot.[21]

Chibesa Bisa's first *main* stop was on the lower valley of the *Kalinku Kayuni* River (popularly known as Kalinku River, see details of the origin of this name in chapter 2). From there, they followed the *Kalinku Kayuni* River eastward up to the source, passing through the present Mphundu area. All this time, they did not meet any of the Tumbuka traditional authorities. They passed through Chidundu's territory and reached Mungwalala's territory. Chidundu and Mungwalala were both subordinates of chief *Chamanyavyose*. The Biza followed the river up to the mountain, where they found another body of water. At that place, there was a big *Musangu* tree in which there were many *Masekwa* birds and Masekwa nests. The body of water was later known as the pool of *Masekwa*, named after the birds they found in the *Musangu [also known as Musangusangu]* tree. The hill in the vicinity was also named *Masekwa* hill. The Biza went on and came to another hill and another river. Both physical features were given one name: *Chimilila* (a stop over, 'a place of

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[21]In his article on 'Ivory Trade and Migration . . ', Miracle reports that Chibeza's group built a village at some place on the eastern side of Luangwa River. The village is known by either of the following names: Chibankata, Chipande and Chamakonje. He also says that an advisor to Chibeza, known only as Mulopwe remained at this village while the rest went ahead.

waiting') near Mphalausenga hill. This is because they stopped and rested in this area. They even built a temporary village by the same name. That was, in fact, the second most important temporary settlement. All that time, the Biza were looking for a good place in which to settle.[22] Chimilila 'village' was also called *Chipulabalume [Chipulabaume]*, 'the men who pound "Ku pula" is to pound. Balume or Baume means men. The local people found it strange to see men [the newcomers] pounding grains instead of women, a name confirming their femalelessness. It was here where because of having no women the men did most of women's tasks, including pounding the grains that they brought with them.

After wandering for some time, in search of land where to settle, the Chibeza group of the Biza came across a village. They went into the village and found a man sitting on a special high traditional stool. Under the stool there were two men sitting, and facing in the opposite directions. The Biza were very surprised indeed. When they came close to the man on the stool, they greeed him and asked him the meaning of what they saw. He responded and said: 'I am Kaleya Mungwalala Kazilondo *mukhala pa bantu* [the one who sits on the people]. This is my leadership name and power'. That was the first encounter with a large population of the indigenous people by the Biza in the valley.

The Biza group that reached sub-chief Mungwalala went back to their base at Chimilila and reported to the rest what they encountered. They reported that the land they were in was under *Mungwalala*, a subchief of a bigger chief they did not meet. For that reason, they moved away from Chimilila, the land that was also under subking Mungwalala. They went southward to a very high mountain that the local Tumbuka called *Kavuba*, the worshipping area. This was a hill where the people worshipped and each time they worshipped, they got what they wanted from their God through their *intermediaries*, the ancestors' spirits. It was at that place, at the foot of the *Kavuba* Mountain, that the Biza had a crucial meeting to decide whether or not, to proceed, to remain there or to go back to Chibesakunda. They decided not to go any further hence, that place became the Biza's terminus or furthest frontier. They said, *'ta goma mic musonga uwu'*, meaning, *the backwoods is our terminus, we shall not go any further*, we *have stopped here*. The local people called these wandering people the *Senga* of the *Goma* clan. Initially, to the Tumbuka, the Biza people had no name. They did not know them very well. For this reason, the

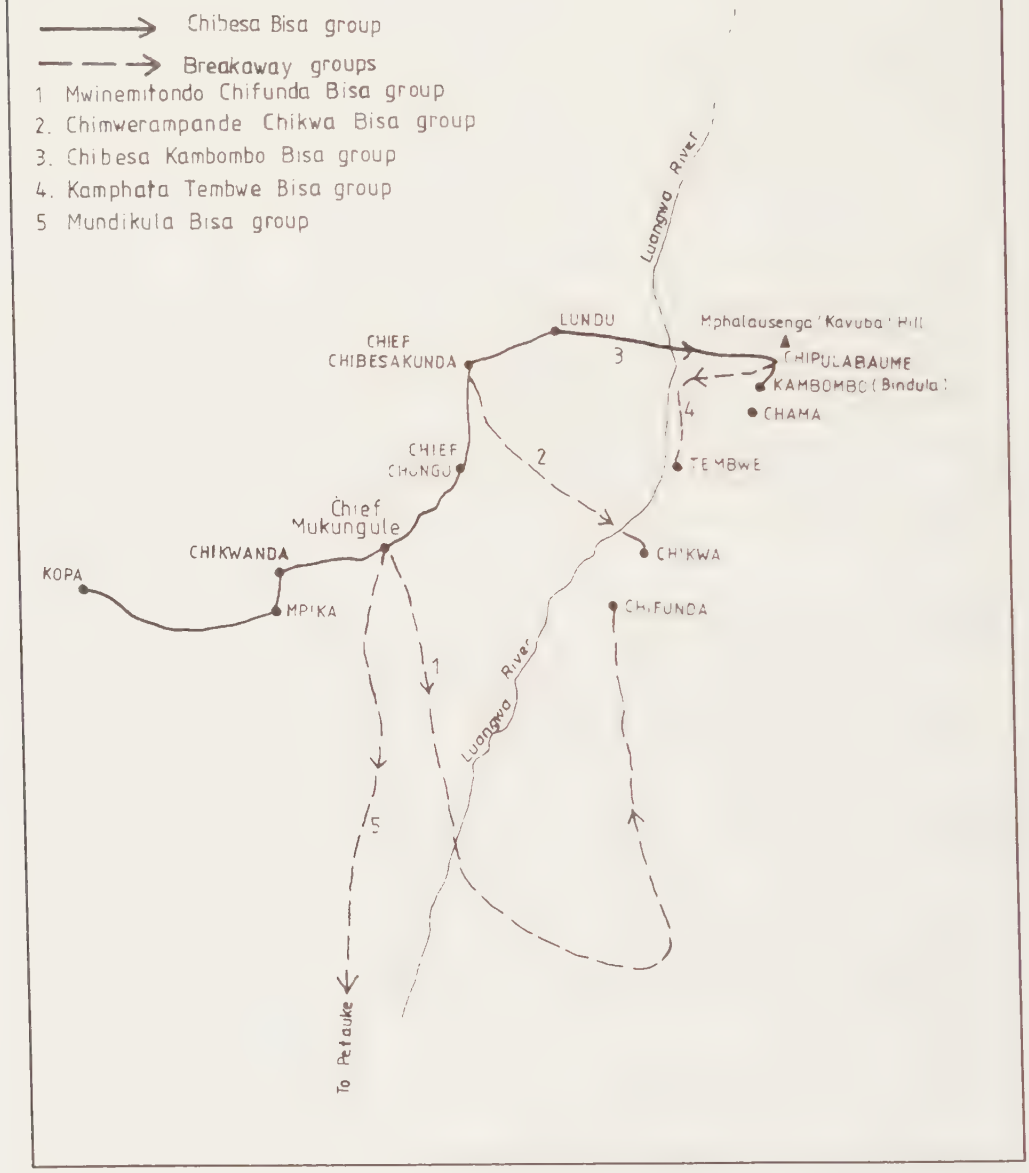
[22]Information on the arrival of the Biza from the following: Headman Kabanda [over 60 years], Chama Boma, Chief Kambombo, Interviewed on 28th June 1990; Zacharia Bota, 82 years, Chama village, Chief Kambombo, Interviewed on 6th August 1998 and Robert Chilembo, 57 years old Mutunga village, Chiyunga, Chief Kambombo Interviewed in 2001. The informants told the author about another unknown group of the Bisa independent of the Chibesa Bisa group that crossed Chamanyavyose's chiefdom on the northern side and went to Mowa chiefdom in the present day northern Malawi. More research is needed on this 'new' group of the Bisa. They stated that 'A subgroup of the Biza, not connected to the Chibeza Biza group, crossed the northern part of the Luangwa valley and reached chief Mowa's territory. There, Mowa settled them on the western side of Vwaza marsh. The area proved very difficult to inhabit because it was waterlogged. They eventually left it and took a southwestern route to reach Chief Chamanyavyose's territory where they ultimately joined the Chibeza's group'. See Map 8 for the location of Vwaza marsh.

Tumbuka called them the *Senga, people of the backwoods (ba mu musenga).* [23] Their *clan* name, which later became the main *surname* of the ruling class of this group, was *Goma,* meaning the people that *stopped* (*goma/gota*) at the Kavuba hill. *Goma* also meant that these people were stopped from going east beyond the mountains by the Kavuba hill. Their *new* name, *Senga (backwoods, musenga)* became their *permanent* name and has remained like this up to today. This is how the *Bisa* [Biza] who entered Chamanyavyose's chiefdom became known as the *Senga.* The Senga renamed the Kavuba hill. They called it *Mphala* ya mu *musenga,* the royal courtyard in the backwoods. That was in rememberance of the temporaly settlement they set up in the backwoods. Later, the hill was called *Mphalausenga,* a short version or a corruption of *Mphala ya mu musenga.*

When they left Mphalausenga hill, the Senga followed the Mphalausenga River downstream. At the foot of the hill, they went southward and crossed another river before sighting another village. Here, they found that the second village was bigger than the first one they saw earlier. In the village, they also saw a man on the throne. The throne was made of Mubanga poles and its upper segment was made of the elephant tusks. The leopard's skins were put on top of the elephant tusks. Two men were also seated under the throne. The man in the throne was wearing a *black crown* spotted with a *leopard's skin* on his head and holding a stick in his hand and lion's skin on top of the elephant tusks where he was seated.

Chibeza and his group came closer to the throne, knelt and greeted the man on the throne. The man just nodded as a sign of acknowledging their greeting. By custom, the man in the throne was only talking to people through someone else, the Prime Minister, *Kazembe.* At that time, the Prime Minister was temporarily not there. The Senga quickly commented that they had not met a man with such honour and respect in the area, since they came in the valley. When the Prime Minister came, on request from the Senga, he explained to them that the person on the throne was their chief, chief *Chamanyavyose Musolomoka ku chanya* (Chamanyavyose means *the one who knows everything.* Musolomoka ku chanya means *the one who dropped from heaven),* in short, *Chama.* The place where they had come was the headquarters (*Musumba*) of the chiefdom. Before the group left to its place between Mphundu and *present* Kambombo headquarters, they spotted a very beautiful young girl at the Palace. That was Princess Mulolwa, daughter of chief Chamanyavyose. The significance of this girl will be discussed later in the chapter. At their new place, the Senga were not happy after hearing about what Chibeza encountered. They thought that chief Chamanyavyose would come to tell them to leave his territory. To their surprise, days, weeks and months passed and chief Chamanyavyose's soldiers [*Ba Vyaka*] did not go there to chase them. That was probably the worst mistake chief Chamanyavyose ever made in his political life.

[23] The Tumbuka have another version of the name *Senga.* They say that the Biza were given the name *Senga* by the Tumbuka because they [the Biza] borrowed or asked for their land. Asking for something from someone is *Ku Senga* in the Chi-Tumbuka language. Thus, the name *Senga* became the name for the people who came in Tumbukaland asking for food and land to settle in. Each explanation of the *origin* of the name *Senga* is correct in its own way.




Map 4. *The routes of Chifunda Bisa, Chikwa Bisa, Chikwa Bisa, Kambombo Bisa and Mundikula Bisa from Chiefs Mukungule and Chibesakunda to Chamanyavyose chiefdom, 1780.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

# CHIBESA KAMBOMBO AND THE DOWNFALL OF CHAMANYAVYOSE

Chibeza made several social visits to Chief Chamanyavyose's headquarters. The trips cemented their relationships and made Chief Chamanyavyose to allow the Senga to continue living where they were, at Kalinku.When Chief Chamanyavyose allowed the Senga to settle in his land, he did not show them a specific place where to settle. He also did not restrict them to a specific area in his large chiefdom. Thus, they could settle anywhere and could expand 'their territory' to any part of his chiefdom. That was another of Chamanyavyose's greatest weakness in his political career.

After some time, the Senga felt at home in Chief Chamanyavyose's territory. Now that they were settled, and knew who the real chief of the territory was, they decided and planned to overthrow him. They planned several ways of carrying out the coup d'état, but the Senga elders approved none of them. Finally, they decided to use a simpler method: the use of the chief's daughter, Mulolwa as *bait* against her father. Before Chibeza proposed to marry Mulolwa, he became very friendly to Chief Chamanyavyose. He paid tributes promptly, and made frequent social visits to Chamanyavyose's palace. That was Chibeza's strategy to marry Chief Chamanyavyose's daughter. If Chibeza did not do so, it was going to be very difficult to marry Chief Chamanyavyose's daughter. He was an alien and by custom it was not easily allowed or accepted by the elders in the clan. They did not want strangers to marry their daughters let alone a princess.

Eventually, Chibeza was allowed to marry the princess. That was Chamanyavyose's third catastrophic mistake and also an important factor that contributed to his political downfall. Chibeza came with his first wife from Bizaland, given to him by a Biza chief, Chief Kopa in the *present* Mpika district.[24] However, that woman was barren, hence, the reason to marry another woman to bear him children. After some time, Mulolwa gave birth to a son. Chibeza did not name his son. It was in fact an honour for Chief Chamanyavyose, the grandfather, to name the son. Indeed, Chief Chamanyavyose named his grandson, *Kasolokela mwa Senga*, meaning: *it is [he is] alone among the Senga*. What it really meant was that his daughter was all by herself among the Senga. Later, the name was shortened to *Kasolwe*.

In the second year, the child was big and was able to walk on his own unaided. According to Chibeza, that was the convenient time for him to implement his plan to overthrow Chief Chamanyavyose, his father-in-law. First, Chibeza created a lie that *Kasolwe* was sick and he wanted Chief Chamanyavyose, the maternal grandfather, to go to Kalinku immediately and pray for the child to get better. A messenger was sent to deliver the message to Chief

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[24] Some books or oral traditions mention the woman given to Chibeza by Chief Kopa as *Mwali*. This was not her name. *Mwali* is a Tumbuka term to describe a marriageable woman as opposed to *Butu*, a woman who is 'big' but has not yet reached puberty.

Chamanyavyose, 20 kilometres south of Kalinku. The chief's response was that the sick child should be brought to the palace for treatment. The Chief would not travel to Chibeza's village. This message was delivered to Chibeza who was not satisfied with it. Instead, he again sent another urgent message asking the Chief to go and see the 'sick' Kasolwe. But Chamanyavyose explained to the messager why he could not travel and insisted that the child be brought to the chief's palace. After all, the family *Kavuba* was at Kamphemba village (Chamanyavyose's headquarters) and not at the village of Chibeza. He queried the wisdom of going to speak to the ancestors' spirits at Kalinku where there was no Chamanyavyose's family Kavuba? The final message from Chibeza was that the child could not move or be taken long distance because he was very sick. The chief was to go to Kalinku at once. On hearing that, Chief Chamanyavyose immediately started off his trip 'alone' to Chibeza's village unofficially. He did not inform his senior sub-chief Mungwalala or any other sub-chief in the chiefdom. That was another grave political blunder Chamanyavyose made. He only allowed two people to accompany him. These were the ones that carried the bow and arrows, harps and other items. Together, only three people went to Kalinku. Chamanyavyose himself was carrying *Kapopo*, a chiefly ritual axe on his shoulder and a walking stick to support him as he walked.

Chibeza met his guests, Chamanyavyose and his two retainers in his village. Chief Chamanyavyose was given a chair equivalent to his own throne at his palace. The only difference was that it was built inside the house. Many people came to greet the chief by kneeling, clapping and saying: *tili pasi kuno fumu*, meaning, *we are down here chief, we are not above you chief.* The response from Chamanyavyose was: *Yewo*, meaning, *yes, thank you.*

What surprised Chamanyavyose was that he found Kasolwe quite healthy and playing with other children. When he asked about it, the answer from Chibeza was that the boy became fine on his (Chamanyavyose's) arrival. Chibeza said that the spirits of the chief's clan treated the boy because they knew that the chief was arriving in the village to see the child. That was why the chief found the child not sick. Chibeza's people reiterated what their *leader* said, by stating that, they also noticed his good health few moments before the chief arrived. Chamanyavyose was given the child to bless him there *and then*, but he refused and said that he was taking the child to *Kamphemba* [a Senga corruption of the original name *Kapemba*] at the family *Kavuba*. The Senga replied by accusing Chamanyavyose of practising witchcraft and that if he refused to bless the child it meant that he was the one bewitching his own grandchild. They also threatened him by saying that if he refused, he would go back to his palace a dead person. When the chief tried to resist physically, they held him and put him on his back on the floor and stretched him flat while everybody stood and watched including the small *Kasolwe*. In the Tumbuka tradition, a leader, especially a chief, should not lay flat on the ground or floor, particularly on his back, while the subjects are standing. Such an action is a sign of paying homage to someone standing. This is *Kulamba or Kulambila,* in Chi-Tumbuka language. If such a thing happens, it means that the one who is standing is now the leader or chief. At that moment all the people shouted, *Chamanyavyose alambila mwana Kasolwe*, meaning that, 'Chief Chamanyavyose has laid flat on his back on the floor to Kasolwe'. It also meant that,

Chief Chamanyavyose had paid *homage* to Kasolwe. Chief Chamanyavyose Musolomoka clearly knew what that meant in the tradition of the Tumbuka and what it also meant from that moment onward. His status had immediately changed: he was no longer a Chief of the Tumbuka in his chiefdom.

After the incident, the Senga told chief Chamanyavyose that from that day onward he was no longer a chief. Kasolwe was now the *new* chief. They told him that from that time if he killed an elephant, the ground tusk (*'la chalo'*) would be brought to the grandson. They also said that the chief's regalia (*attire of authority or symbol of office*) was to be brought to Kasolwe, the new chief. However, our informants made it clear that, the *handover* of the chiefly regalia from Chamanyavyose to Kasolwe including the official handover ceremony was *never* done. Worse still, nobody from Chibeza's group realised or remembered that chief Chamanyavyose's regalia was not given to Kasolwe. The situation has remained like this to this day. Therefore, what that meant and still means is that technically, the chieftaincy was not [*all*] completely transferred from Chief Chamanyavyose to Chibeza Kambombo. However, from that time and without the chief's regalia Chibeza began praising himself thus: *'Ine Goma mumapili nkayegha mbuto mu muskambo kufuma ku Uluba'* meaning, 'I came from the Luba kingdom carrying seeds secretly and stopped here in the hills'. What he meant was that, 'He came from Luba kingdom not as a chief but now he has become one'. He was, from that moment, the new chief of the Tumbuka in Chamanyavyose chiefdom.

The thing to remember is that it is a historical fact that traditionally the Tumbuka are a matrilineal society. However, as noted earlier and for the reasons given, the Tumbuka were and still are an ethnic group that practises matrilineal ascedancy to political power. Only when it is necessary and beyond their control and in very rare circumstances do they practise ascendancy to political power patrilineally. Thus, matrilineally, Kasolwe, the grandson of Chamanyavyose was, although with a remote chance, one of the many rightful heirs to takeover the Chamanyavyose chieftainship at a later date. However, the way it was done was not correct traditionally. It was done at a wrong time and in a wrong way. What happened was a form of a *coup d'tat*, or a *diplomilitary* takeover.

The other point to explain is that, *Kasolwe* Chibeza Goma was a Biza-Senga not a pure Tumbuka. In the near future he was to become the chief of the Senga not the chief of the Tumbuka. Like the Tumbuka, the Senga were also a matrilineal society. However, many of them entered the Tumbuka territory without women or their wives. So, they had to marry the local women. For this reason, for them to religiously follow their custom of the nephew taking over as chief after the death of a chief, was at this time not possible. They had to wait for, may be, two generations for their children to have their children among which would be daughters whose children (mainly sons) would be chosen as chiefs. As a strategy, they applied the patrilineal system of succession to political power. The sons or brothers began taking over as chiefs after the death of the chiefs. That system has remained to this day, contrary to the custom of their ancestors, the Luba and the Bisa. However, this change from matrilineal to patrilineal with chieftaincy running from father to brother and to the son was followed by the Chibeza Goma clan only. The *other* Senga or Biza continued with their original tradition of matrilineal ascendancy to political power up to this day.

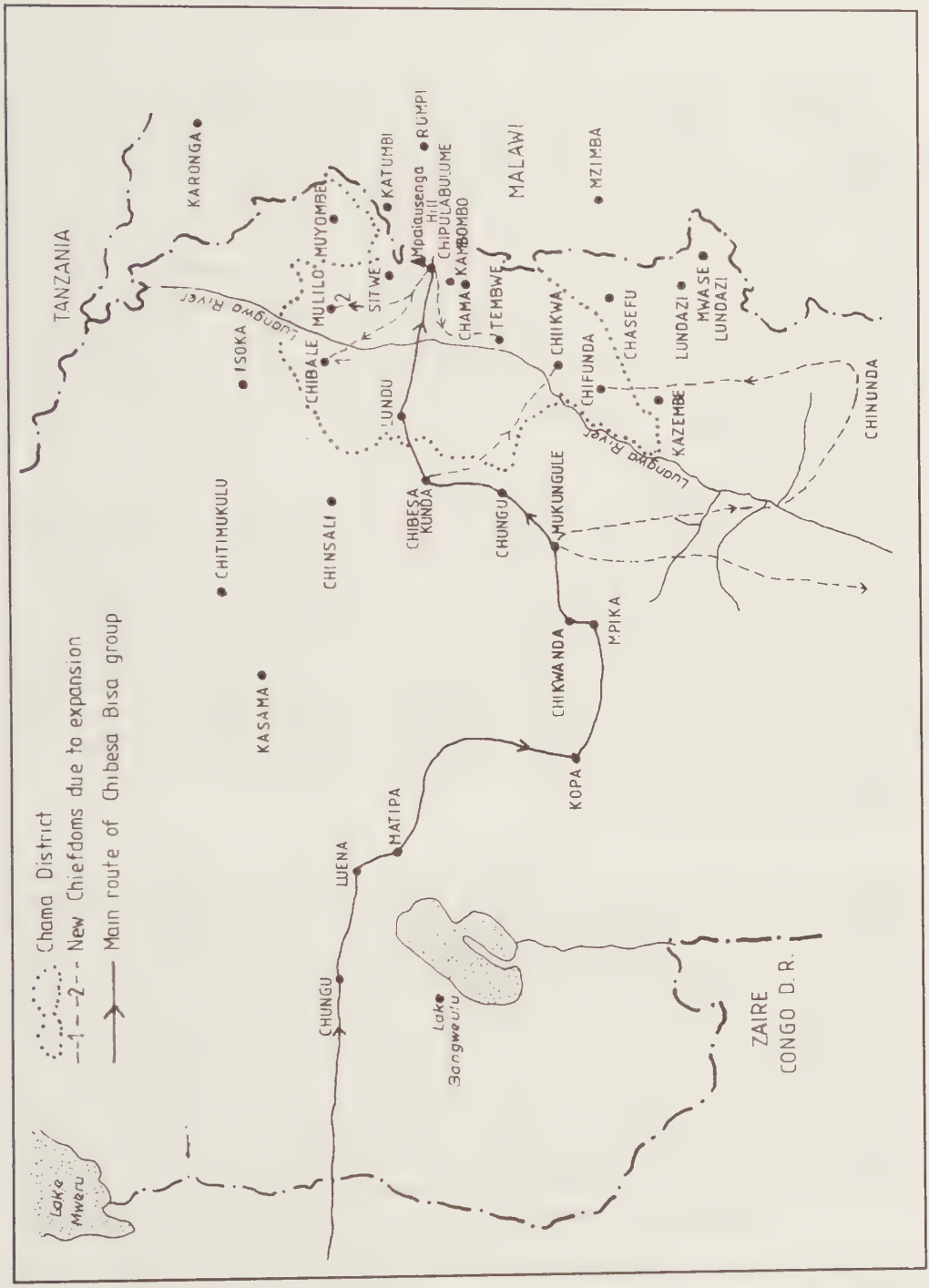
The Balowoka from central Tanzania entering the Tumbuka kingdom from east of Lake Malawi did the same to the Tumbuka people: they usurped their political power at almost the same time as the Senga were usurping the Tumbuka political power from the western end of the kingdom between 1770 and 1795.[25]As expected, in both circumstances, the Tumbuka never changed in favour of one of the two systems. They continued as they had been when they created their kingdom, practising matrilineal system and where necessary 'changing' to patrilineal system. The same was true for all the Tumbuka chiefs who were thereafter relegated to ordinary sub-chiefs: they *followed both systems* depending on the prevailing circumstances. The brother or the son was allowed to become the new chief on the death of a chief. The nephews became chiefs only in very special circumstances. In this case the tradition allowed *only the son* of the incumbant *chief's sister* to takeover chieftainship on his death.

Probably, due to the unusual situation the Senga faced, after the death of Chibeza there emerged serious succession disputes and they left a big wound in the Kambombo Senga's unity. Some Senga elders were not happy with Kasolwe as the new Kambombo. This led to a split. One of the break-away groups was led by Kamphata, a very close companion of Chibeza. The group left Kambombo in about 1805 and formed its own chiefdom, Tembwe, south of Kambombo. Its headquarters was Mkoka, on the stream by the same name.

South of Tembwe chiefdom was Chikwa, another Senga chiefdom under the Ng'uni clan. The Chikwa group was in the same original Chibeza Kambombo group from Luba kingdom, but split with the main group at Chibesakunda, in Bisaland, on the westbank of Luangwa River. From Chibesakunda, the Chibeza Kambombo group went straight eastward and crossed Luangwa River. However, the Chikwa group left Chibesakunda and crossed the Luangwa River from the south-western direction. This group was under Chimwerampande and Mpiana Chawala (Chabala), the brothers by the same mother, Ngoza Kamunga. After meandering in the Luangwa valley, the group finally settled south of Tembwe chiefdom, in the Tumbuka territory under headman Mpamvi in the area extending from Lunzi to Lumezi Rivers. This was in about 1810.

Chifunda is the southernmost Senga chiefdom in the whole Sengaland in Luangwa valley. The Chifunda segment of the Senga also broke off from the main Chibeza Kambombo group at Chief Mukungule, south of Chibesakunda. The group went south from Mukungule under the leadership of Mwinemitondo of the Lungu clan. The Chifunda group crossed Luangwa at a point near Lukuzye [Rukuzi] River sometime before 1840. From there, the group moved in a southeastern direction and settled in the territory of Chief Chinunda, a Chewa. Later, they moved away from Chinunda's territory and settled in the Lumezi-Lundazi basin, also known as *Nyimbwe*, south of Lumezi River. This was also the land of the Tumbuka. The details of these chiefdoms are explained separately below.

[25] As stated earlier in this book, the Balowoka are also thought to have come from Unyamwezi in central Tanzania. This is the area where the Gogo, a splinter group settled after Mudala died. More research is needed to find out if the Balowoka were the same people that went north after the death of Mudala, and later on migrated and settled in Utumbuka, the land of their cousins led by Mulonga Mbulaluwilo. It is certainly true that the Baloboka came from Central Tanzania. The initial group used the eastern route crossing Lake Malawi to reach the M'nyanjagha Kingdom, the rest, such as the Yombe used a direct route souhward from Central Tanzania to reach M'nyanjagha's Kingdom.




Map 5. *The routes of the Chibesa Bisa groups from Luba Kingdom in Mwata Yamvo Empire to areas where they settled in Chamanyavyose chiefdom, 1780*

## CHAPTER SIX

# FROM CHAMANYAVYOSE TO MUTAYACHALO

After he was stripped of his political power by Chibeza, 'Chief' Chamanyavyose and his two assistants left Kalinku and headed straight to his sub-chief Mungwalala. There, he narrated the story and Mungwalala blamed Chamanyavyose for not telling him in advance about the trip he made to Chibeza's village. It was all Chamanyavyose's fault that the chiefdom was now lost to the Senga. In conclusion, Mungwalala told Chamanyavyose that: *Mwatayachalo* (you have lost the chiefdom/land/territory to the Senga). Shortly thereafter, the Tumbuka people in Chamanyavyose chiefdom heard what had happened and they were very sad and angry with their chief. Quickly, Chamanyavyose informed M'nyanjagha and the sub-chiefs in the Kingdom such as Chiyunga, Kapemba, Mgwela, Jalila, Katongomala and Chiti. The other chiefs felt very sorry for him. They also realised that what had happened to Chamanyavyose was likely to happen to them because of the intruders entering their chefdoms. But they did nothing to intervene in the problems that Chamanyavyose faced.

On arrival, Chamanyavyose found a number of his subjects gathered and weeping at his palace. They were crying the loss of their country by their own chief. After mourning with his people, he later explained the circumstances that led to the loss of his chieftainship. That was how the Tumbuka in the present *Chama* [Chamanyavyose] district lost their chieftainship to the Senga. The British government elevated Kambombo's position to *Senior* chief Kambombo in 1932.[26] The Tumbuka in Chama district honour and respect Senior chief Kambombo as their chief. It was neither the present Chamanyavyose nor the present Kambombo who made the original mistake. The Senga chief was cleverer than the Tumbuka chief who took the Senga for granted and sincerely trusted them. There is a saying in Tumbukaland: '*Ngulube yikulya mweneko munda*', meaning: '*The wild pig kills the owner of the field where it grazes*'.

After some time, Chamanyavyose Musolomoka gave himself a new name to comemorate what had happened. He called himself *Mutayachalo* (the one who has lost the chieftaincy or the land). He built his own village by that name. The village still stands to day east of *Chama Boma* after the Chama Basic School football field. The village is between Chizgobi (now known as Chizowe), his brother's village and the original Chamanyavyose village (Kamphemba) on the north bank of Kamphemba River. Chamanyavyose left the original village under his first born child, Zgala (*play*). The Senga comforted Zgala by giving him the name, Kanabesa. In Chi-Bisa language, *Kanabesa* means, the respected one. He was to be the respected one because the Senga chief promised him that henceforth, the death of a Kambombo would first be announced to him. The Tumbuka mispronounced the name *Kanabesa* and it became *Kanabeza*. The name has remained to this day as the name for Zgala and sometimes Chamanyavyose village is also called Kanabeza. The name

[26] More details on the arrival of the Biza/Senga into Chamavyose territory from: P.M. Mukuka, *National Archives of Zambia. Calenders of the District Notebooks (Northern Province 1862– 1963) vol. 2.* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1966), passim.

Zgala has disappeared completely. Kanabeza tookover leadership from his father "chief" Chamanyavyose Fwasani Musolomoka Mutayachalo. He was the third Chamanyavyose. He began crowning the subsequent Mutayachalo headmen.

Chibeza and Mulolwa had another son whom the Senga named Wengo. The Tumbuka did not know the meaning of the name Wengo (seasame plant or seasame seeds). Another child, a daughter, was born and named by the maternal parents. Mutayachalo (Chamanyavyose Musolomoka) named the child as *Utesi* (*a lie*). Mutayachalo named the granddaughter Utesi as a way of registering his protest to what had happened to him and the Tumbuka people in Luangwa valley. The name was a clear testimony of how the Senga cheated him and got his chieftainship. It was also to show the Senga how the Tumbuka really felt after being tricked into a situation where they lost their territory to the invaders. Mutayachalo created another village and gave it to his grandson, Kanabeza's child. His name was *Zelu zamala* (meaning, *I. Chamanyavyose have no more wisdom*). The name of the village has always been *Zelu* (wisdom), a short version of *Zelu zamala*. As noted above the first Zelu was the son of Kanabeza and was a village headman. The second Zelu was a nephew of the first Zelu. This one eventually became the 7th Chamanyavyose.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE SENGA: CHIEFDOMS WITHOUT A KINGDOM

After some time, Chibeza Kambombo shifted from Mpalausenga and occupied the Kalinku basin that was previously under Chidundu, a local Tumbuka sub-chief who for a brief period had paid tribute to Mloboka. Chidundu changed allegiance from Mloboka to Kambombo over some dispute with the former long before he died. It was from the Chidundu people that the Kambombo Senga got many of their wives. However, for strategic reason in a new territory where they were strangers, the Senga adopted a patrilineal custom of inheritance to political power, whereby after the succession of each brother the sons succeed. The Senga like the Bisa were matrilineal before they occupied the Luangwa valley. The Tumbuka were and still are a mtrilineal society as well.

Politically the Senga were not united. The original Chibesa Bisa group split twice before reaching the Luangwa valley. The Chifunda and Chikwa divisions were left behind in Mukungule and Chibesakunda chiefdoms respectively. Senga oral sources are silent on the reasons for such splits. Finally, after they had all settled down and expanded their various chiefdoms in the Luangwa valley they failed to come together and form one kingdom under one paramount chief or King. Instead, each of the five groups plus two created chiefdoms and two incorporated ones remained as separate chiefdoms. The main five chiefdoms were, Chibeza Kambombo, Kamphonje Lundu, Kamphata Tembwe, Chikwa and Chifunda. The created ones were Mulilo and Chibale while Chikontha and Katumbi sandwiched between Kambombo and Mulilo chiefdoms were technically independent of chief Kambombo. They were under the Mloboka clan of the Chabinga family and were only practically incorporated into the large Kambombo chiefdom after the Second World War. The same was true for chiefs Fulaza, Pondo and Mwila that were independent chiefdoms before 1938 but were incorporated into chief Chikwa at the beginning of the Second World War for failing to have enough number of villages to qualify as independent chiefdoms. At the same time and on the same grounds, what was previously Vunda chiefdom was incorporated in chief Chifunda. For details see Map 4.

However, things changed in 1937. In that year, the colonial government, for its own administrative convenience, imposed chief Kambombo as senior chief with paramount authority on the Senga.[27] It was a loose political unity that was initially beneficial only to the colonial government in governing the Senga, but left the chiefdoms semi-independent. The situation has not changed since then and the Senga have continued to respect and enjoy the traditional administration of their Senior Chief Kambombo.

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[27] For details on how chief Kambombo was imposed on the Senga as their senior chief, read minutes of two important meetings held in 1937 in NAZ/SEC2/320, Almagamation of the Senga tribe.

## KAMBOMBO CHIEFDOM

The first in the line of Kambombo chiefs was Chibeza of the Goma dynasty. In Ci-Tumbuka, *ku goma* is when a journey comes to a dead end either because of difficulties created by physical barriers or circumstances beyond one's control. When Chibeza's Senga failed to climb the Mphalausenga hill to go east, they came back and told the local people of their failure. That was *'ku goma'*. From that moment the Chibeza Senga were known as and belonged to the *Goma clan.* After usurping power from the Tumbuka Chibeza's local 'subordinate' chiefs included Mungwalala, Chamanyavyose and Kampuzunga. Chibeza died in about 1798 at Kalinku, his new headquarters.[28] After his death intense successional disputes emerged, especially between his two sons who contested for the throne of Kambombo. On one side was Kasolwe, the elder son from Chibeza's Head Wife [the First House but not necessarily the first wife] Mulolwa, a Tumbuka woman, the daughter of chief Chamanyavyose.[29] On the other side there was Mwimba, the only son of Mwali the first wife, a Bisa girl given to Chibeza by chief Kopa.[30]

This was the first succession dispute among the Senga of the Kambombo group in their new land. The problem was how to resolve this dispute in an area where they had no Bisa senior chiefs. The difficult question was: who would settle this problem that was already impregnated with ethnicity? One contestant was from a Bisa mother and was therefore considered Bisa by many Senga while the one from a Tumbuka mother was considered Tumbuka and not Biza. Because of the nature of the problem and the difficulties involved, the case was referred to their former chief in Bisaland, chief Chibesakunda. Among other things, this action by the early Senga chiefs to recognised a Bisa chief as their senior is strong evidence on which one would safely conclude that the Senga are in fact a Tumbukalised offshoot of the Bisa in the upper Luangwa valley.

Chief Chibesakunda was put in a very difficult position in the Mwimba-Kasolwe case. One thing was clear: the Bisa who crossed Luangwa River on their way east, later called Senga, had no women of their own. This meant that the matrilineal Bisa inheritance laws could not apply to children born out of non-Bisa women of another matrilineal society with Bisa [Senga] men. Chief Chibesakunda declined to nominate a successor to Chibeza Kambombo. In the end the Senga followed a new inheritance system: the patrilineal inheritance system.

Thus, in 1800, the Senga chose Kasolwe as their next Kambombo. This was a profound cultural change for the Senga. The new chief's headquarters was Kalinku, a new

[28] They failed to agree on the next leader, hence succession disputes following the death of Chibeza and a new Kambombo emerged in about 1800.

[29] In this polygamous society, the first wife is known as Mukolo, the second wife is called Chizonde and the third wife is called Kapeta.

[30] By the time this group was at Chipulabalume or Chimilila the girl chief Kopa gave Chibeza had not yet 'matured' that was the reason for marrying a local tumbuka woman.

settlement sixteen kilometres north of Chamanyavyose village, on the south bank of Kalinku River. Kasolwe ruled up to 1815 when Katangalika took over as Kambombo. Mwimba, the previously defeated claimant became chief Kambombo in 1825 and ruled up to 1840 when Matuba came to the throne. Mazgeba became the chief of the Senga from 1855 to 1870.

Mazgeba was succeeded by Kachila in 1870. This was the time when because of the Ngoni looting, raids and total destruction of some parts of the Tumbukaland in Northern Nyasaland, an exodus of the Tumbuka settled in Sitwe area among their fellow Tumbukas under the self imposed Baloboka chiefs. The 8th Kambombo was Chiyabe. He was succeeded by Chimbunda as the 9th Kambombo. During his reign the Ngoni from Nkhamanga area raided northeast of Kambombo chiefdom. Ngoni warriors killed him at Viziba spring as he attempted to escape to his younger brother Mulilo, northwest of Katumbi (Sitwe).

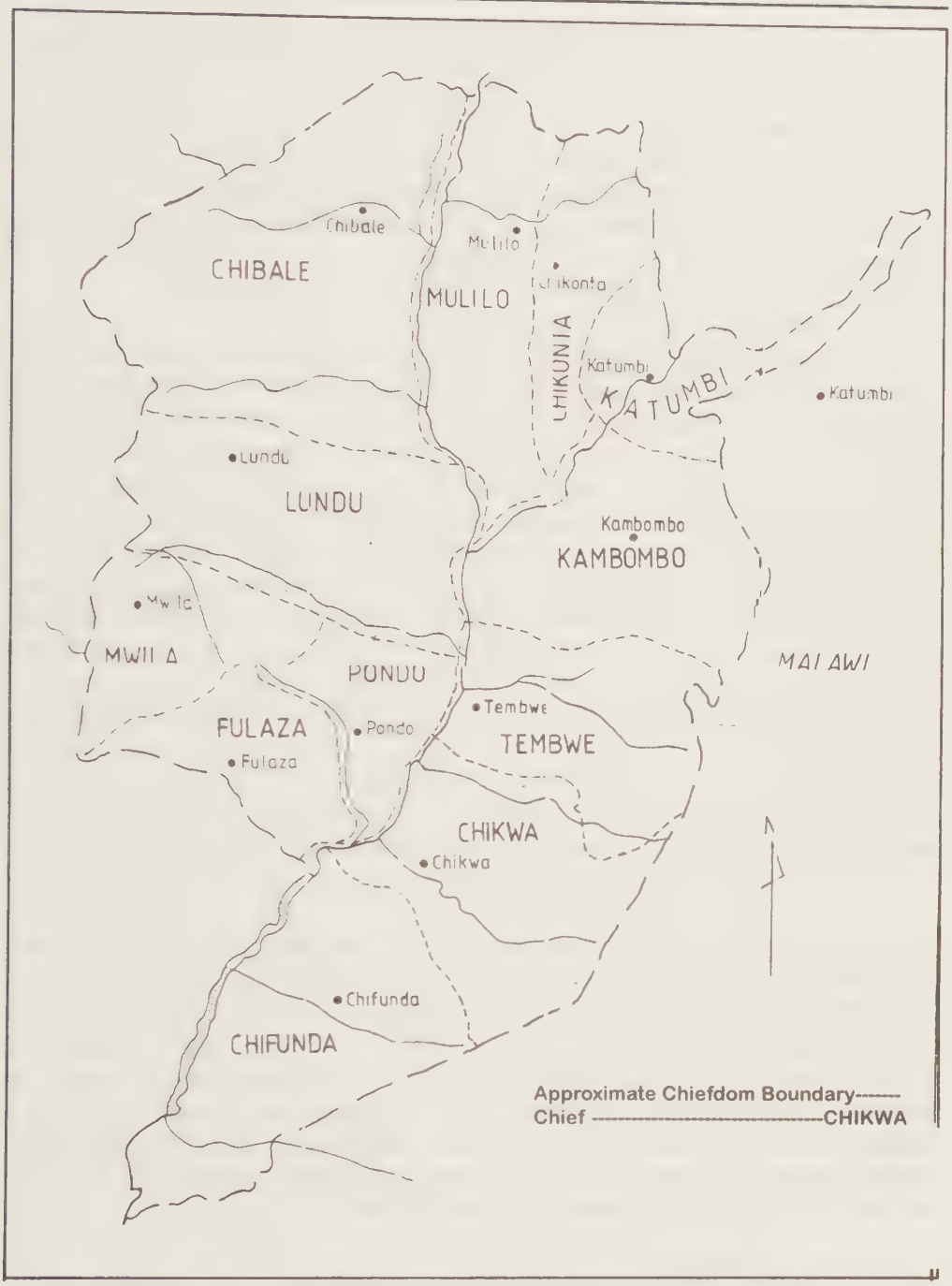
Chimbunda was succeeded by Munaka who is remembered for being the Kambombo whose reign saw the arrival of the European in Chama district. He died in 1913 and was replaced by Yituba who ruled up to 1917 and was followed in 1918 by Kavuluvulu Mwininkhonde who was deaf in both ears and paralysed by an incurable disease. Mwininkhonde was followed by Zgabwata. After him, Mitima Yibili became the 14th Kambombo. The 15th Kambombo was Lindila A. Lufeyo who was succeeded by Nthowa Yimo as the 16th Kambombo. The current Kambombo is Gideon Goma.[31]

Chief Kambombo's chiefdom expanded towards the north and northwest through peaceful incorporation of the local Tumbuka subchiefs of the former Chamanyavyose chiefdom. The incorporated chiefdoms included Katumbi in Sitwe area under the self-imposed Mloboka Kapungu (Kaphungu!) of the famous Chabinga clan who ruled the area from about 1790 and, Chikontha of the Nyimbili clan. Mulilo and Chibale west of Chikontha were acquired chiefdoms under Kambombo who appointed his relatives to rule them.

## TEMBWE CHIEFDOM

The first succession disputes after Chibeza's death left a big wound in the Kambombo Senga's unity. Some Sengas were not happy with Kasolwe as the new Kambombo. This led to a split. The breakaway group, the Tembwe Senga, under Kamphata left Kambombo in about 1805. First, the group headed west and settled briefly at the place called Tembwe Luwumbu on the east bank of Luangwa River, south of the confluence of Luangwa and Luwumbu Rivers. But this area proved to be prone to seasonal flooding and hence not good for permanent settlement. For this reason, the group headed south and came to settle in the Lupamazi-Mkoka basin in 1805. This was in the Tumbuka area under sub-chief Mbachunda.

[31] This data on Kambombo Family Tree came from work done by Suzgo L.B.Chavula, a Second Year student in 2000 at the University of Zambia School of Education. The data were for his Project course, RS 202: Indigenous Religions in Central Africa. In 2000 he interviewed Senior Chief Kambombo and a number of headmen in his chiefdom.




Map 6. *Senga chiefdoms in 1938*

The first chief of the Tembwe Senga in the new land was Kamphata, nephew of Chibeza. His capital was on the eastern side of the chiefdom at Mkoka, on the stream by the same name. A century later in 1905, Mkoka was made a government sub-station by Coxhead the District Commissioner for Lundazi District. Kamphata ruled his people up to 1825 after which Chitimbi took over. His rule was brief and in 1830 Kwinya usurped the throne. He came to the throne because Mwila the right person was still too young. Kwinya being the uncle was allowed to rule until Mwila reached the right age to takeover as chief. Kwinya's rule was short and disliked by many people. Fortunately in 1830 Mwila was big enough to become the chief.

Mwila is on record as being one of the good leaders the Tembwe Senga had since Kamphata. But he came into conflict with one aspirant to his throne. That was Mbuleni, a descendant of a sister of Kamphata. The story is that his mother gave birth to him while in Ngoni's captivity in Lundazi, east of the chiefdom. His mother was later released after chief Tembwe (Mwila) paid the Ngoni two elephant tusks. Later on, Mbuleni's mother organised a strong campaign to promote claims of her son to the throne on the grounds of the legitimacy of his descent on the maternal side. Technically she was right. But the fact that he was born of 'unknown' Ngoni man, many considered him as an alien. The two rival factions fought a bitter civil war after the death of Mwila.

On Mwila's death his grandson Kamulibwe was to become the Tembwe. But Mbuleni's cause prevailed and he became the chief. This was in 1870. His reign was short. In 1885 his nephew Chibere, whose reign is remembered for his intense cruelty, succeeded him. He derived pleasure from immersing infants in the river. He was disliked by many people. He died in 1880, and the throne was reverted to the line of Mwila. This time Mwila's grandson, Kamulibwe became the chief.

Kamulibwe proved to be a very able leader. During his time in office, he faced two major problems. The Ngoni on the eastern side of his chiefdom and the British (through the British South Africa Company) occupation of his territory. He faced these problems with good support from the people. He built stockaded villages [Linga or Thembe] to defend his people from the Ngoni impis [soldiers]. He is credited for resisting one strong Ngoni invasion. On the British side, he adopted a policy of collaboration. His cooperation paid off. Arab slave traders were wiped out of Luangwa valley by the British soldiers. As a reward for cooperation with the British, his capital, Mkoka became the first government station in Chama district.

Kamulibwe had fourteen wives who became very jealousy of each other in his old age. He is also known to have been impotent in his old age. The two problems were so intense that he attempted suicide using his muzzle-loading musket. In a bid to save his life, his left hand was amputated. This aside, the British government found him to be incomparably the most able of the Senga chiefs'. He died in 1922 and was succeeded by Mcheche.

## CHIKWA CHIEFDOM

South of Tembwe Senga was another chiefdom, the Chikwa Senga under the Ng'uni family. They were in the same group as the Kambombo-Tembwe Senga at Chibesakunda where the split took place. However, this group crossed Luangwa River on the southwestern direction long after the Kambombo-Tembwe group had left Chibesakunda.

From the area where the split took place in Chibesakunda's chiefdom, the Chikwa group was led by Chimwerampande and Mpiana Chawala [Chabala].[32] The two were brothers by the same mother Ngoza Kamunga. The Chikwa Senga settled in the Tumbuka country of sub-chief Mpamvi in an area extending from Lunzi to Lumezi (north) Rivers. This was in about 1810. By this time Chimwerampande was the undisputed leader of the Chikwa Senga. Unfortunately, he met a tragic death in 1830. He had quarrelled with his other brother (probably a brother by the same father but different mother) Muwole, over land issues.[33] Out of intense anger, Chimwerampande and his family plus some supporters voluntarily entered the Ntembwe pool and died by drowning themselves. This was mass suicide, probably the first of its kind in the Luangwa valley. Ntembwa pool is north of Lunzi River near Doroba. Chimwerampande was succeeded by his brother Mpiana Chawala. But he was not a good ruler and was eventually overthrown.

Mpiana Chawala's successor was Chirutema in 1835. He was also known by the other name of Kango. He was also not a good ruler. He was cruel and drowned many children. He died in 1845, and Chimphamba became the Chikwa. He was a very good leader and respected by his people. His reign witnessed the introduction of a strain of Chewa blood into the Ng'uni family through marriage between Zimwanda [Zumwanda] also known as 'Kankuku Kalanda' [miserable chicken] and chief's mother Nyawa. Not much is known about the position of Nyawa's husband, Muchambwe. The two were not in marriage for a long time. The circumstances leading to the end of marriage are not known. What is important is that there was intermarriage between the Chikwa Senga and the Chewa on their east. Uyoyo, a Chewa headman settled among the Chikwa Senga for many years prior to this famous marriage. Later on Zimwanda's authority was stronger in the eastern part of the chiefdom with Mtonya as the eastern seat of the Chikwa government, while Doroba was the western seat of the government under Chimphamba.[34]

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[32] According to Poole, in his book *Native Tribes of the Eastern Province*, p. 24. Chimwerampande, 'was so-called because he took his potations from a vessel more copious than that in ordinary use for drinking purposes'.

[33] In their culture like many African societies, children from the same father but of different mother are your brohers or sisters. For more details on such relationships read, Yizenge A.Chondoka, *Traditional Marriages in Zambia. A study in cultural History* (Ndola: Mission Press, 1988), p. 16.

[34] According to Poole in his work, *Native Tribes of the Eastern Province*, p. 27, oral records say that Chikwa chiefs lived at Doroba and were buried at Mtonya.

Mwerekete, a cousin of Chimphamba took over the throne on his cousin's death in 1850. Not much is known about him. His short rule was followed by Marunga, a brother of Chimphamba, from 1860 to 1885. The children of Zimwanda and Nyawa, namely, Chikompa [Chikompwa] and Musampeni [Msampeni] were now big enough to rule, although many headmen did not approve of them and ignored them. But in 1885 Chikompa became Chikwa for five years before his brother Musampeni took over and ruled up to 1895. The Zimwanda line of chiefs in Chikwa seems to have expired with the death of Musampeni.

Mbuwa [Mbua], Mwerekete's mother became the first woman chief in Chikwa in 1895. Her reign witnessed the coming of Europeans in the chiefdom. She died in 1903. She is remembered as a very good chief. On her death, Chipepe her son also known as Chadumuka became the chief. It seems initially he did not cooperate very well with the British colonial rulers at Nabwalya Boma, west of the chiefdom across Luangwa River. But later on he did cooperate with the colonial government. He had thirteen wives. He died in 1913.

Chirubwe, also known as Galamala succeeded his uncle Chadumuka in 1913. He also inherited his late uncle's thirteen wives. This was in addition to his own three wives. The number increased to twenty-one before he was overthrown. In 1918 Galamala was succeeded by his aunt Kamutagwera (also known as Kapotwe), the second female chief in *Chirumba,* as Chikwa chiefdom is sometimes known.

Like the Kambombo chiefdom, Chikwa chiefdom also expanded westward where the territory so acquired was subdivided into chiefdoms of Mwila, Fulaza and Pondo. After 1938 the colonial government phased out these chiefdoms.

## CHIFUNDA CHIEFDOM

Chifunda is the southernmost chiefdom in the whole Sengaland in Luangwa valley. The Chifunda Senga seem not to have been at Chibesakunda where a major Senga split took place. They broke-off at chief Mukungule, south of Chibesakunda where the whole Senga group stayed for a short while. When the rest went north to Chibesakunda, the Chifunda division remained at Mukungule, as a breakaway group.[35] They went south from Mukungule under the leadership of Mwinemitondo of the Lungu dynasty. They crossed Luangwa River at a point near Lukuzye [Rukuzi] River before1840. From there they moved in a southeastern direction and settled in the country of chief Chinunda, a Chewa. They sought protection from him against the Ngoni raids. The Ngoni from the South on their journey northward were raiding this part of Luangwa valley. Their base was in Petauke. After the Ngoni left this area, Mwinemitondo and his people left Chinunda's country. He went in a northwestly direction and settled once again in the Lumezi-Lundazi basin, also known as Nyimbwe,

[35] One version of the story is that Maole Chikwa remained at Masipi Pool fishing with their groups. This place was between Mphalakasanga hill and chief Kopa's chiefdom. Probably, this was why after Masipi they are not mentioned again in the oral records of the Chibeza and Tembwe Sengas.

south of Lumezi River. Like elsewhere in Luangwa valley, this was originally land of the Tumbuka.

After few years in the fertile Nyimbwe area, Mwinemitondo and his people faced a new problem. Mkazingoma and his hunting group, sent here to hunt elephants for their tusks by chief Mwase of Kasungu waged a bitter war with Mwinemitondo's Senga and the native Tumbukas. Mkazingoma was successful and ended up settling in this area. Later on, chief Kazembe west of Lundazi defeated Mkazingoma and occupied his land. Mwinemitondo left Nyimbwe and went north into Luelo valley, also known as Chilenje. It was here where the Chifunda Senga finally settled and their leader Mwinemitondo died in 1875. On his death, Kapalakonje took over as the second Chifunda.

It was Kapalakonje who consolidated the Chifunda chiefdom in the Luelo valley. He faced raids from both the Bemba and the Ngoni. He died in 1890 and was succeeded by Mwase whose short reign is not remembered by many people. He was followed by Chiwowe who fought serious battles with the Ngoni. He died in one of the battles at Malovya [Malovia] in 1900. Chiwowe was followed by Tewa as the next chief of the Chifunda Senga. He also faced serious Ngoni and Bemba raids. However, he successfully made a truce with the Ngoni. In 1913, he fled to the Ngoni country because of intense Bemba raids. He died there in exile. He was replaced by another chief who is remembered only as the most generous chief in the chiefdom. Note that, as was the case in Chikwa chiefdom, Vunda, within Chifunda chiefdom was also a chiefdom under the overall chief Chifunda before 1938 but was later phased out by the colonial government.

## POINT OF DEPARTURE: THE SENGA AND NSENGA

While in chief Mukungule's territory a segment of the Chibesa Bisa group broke away and went southwest. This breakaway group was led by one of Chibeza's brothers, Mundikula.[36] Traditions say that Chibeza left a group of his people under Mundikula to wait for him at a spot in chief Mukungule's territory. He told Mundikula that he was going to come back for them after finding a new 'home'. But it seems Chibeza did not live up to his promise. He did not go back or send someone to show them directions to the new 'home' where Chibeza was with the rest of the group. They waited for too long and for this reason, Mundikula, the leader of the group earned a nickname, *Kalindawalo, meaning the one who waits with his people*. Tired of waiting for Chibesa and in frustration Mundikula and his group headed in a different direction to find a new 'home' for themselves.[37] They went south from chief Mukungule's territory and ended up in the present day Petauke district where they settled among

[36] Miracle in his work, 'Ivory Trade and Migration . . .', p. 432, states that it was Mphalakasanga hill where the main Chibesa Bisa group split into two groups, namely, the Chibesa Bisa group and the Chibesa Bisa [Mundikula] group under Chibesa'a brother Mundikula took place

[37] Miracle, 'Ivory Trade and Migration . . .', p 429. His people in this group that was waiting for Chibesa to come back for them gave Mundikula an additional name, Kalindawalo/*Kulindawalo*

the local people. Shortly afterwards they came under Undi Chewa's domination and were known as the Nsenga.[38] The two groups, those in the north and those in the south did not know about each other until the time of labour migration when en route to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) some of the Northern Sengas passing through Nsenga country in Petauke district learnt of what happened to the Senga group that was left behind under Mundikula, one of Chibeza's brothers.[39]

[38] *Nsenga* and not *Senga* probably because of the differences in the languages of the local people or those who 'colonised' them. In Luangwa North, the Senga 'colonised' the Tumbuka. In the South, the Senga were colonised by the Chewa shortly after their arrival in the new land. Chewa language allows for an *N* in the pronounciation of the name *Senga* while the Tumbuka language does not, hence, in the South the name slightly changed while in the North it was left in tact. The problem with this explanation is that it assumes that the name Senga was for the Chibesa Bisa from the point of departure in Bisaland before they crossed Luangwa River. This as explained above, is highly doubtful..

[39] Miracle, 'Ivory and Migration . . .', p. 429.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE TUMBUKA UNDER THE SENGA CHIEFS

The Senga entered the Tumbuka territory in small family groups. We are told that the Senga were very shrewd and treacherous and are remembered for not being sincere in their dealings with the local traditional authorities. After staying amongst the local

Map 7 *Current Senga chiefdoms created after 1945*

people for a long time, they married the local women. That was one way of assimilating the local culture and understanding the people better. After some time, they usurped political power from the Tumbuka chief by unconventional methods of diplomilitary. Initially, a few Tumbuka headmen accepted the senga political power, but gradually the Senga were able to exercise their power over almost the entire Tumbuka people in the Luangwa valley. It was only the small portion in the north under the Mlowoka leader, Themba Katumbi Limilazamba that remained outside the Senga political power. Although theoretically, the area was under Themba Mulindawafwa Katumbi in Hebe [Hewe] district in northern province in Nyasaland [Malawi], in practice, it was Chibeza or his successors who had more political power over the Tumbuka in that part of Chamanyavyose's chiefdom especially from 1964.

Like the Balowoka, the Senga ruled the Tumbuka through a system of indirect rule. That was a system whereby the Senga ruled the Tumbuka through the existing traditional native political structures. Wherever they ruled, the Senga left the Tumbuka local traditional authorities to rule over their own people according to their custom and creed. Thus, the grassroot rulers at village level or in some rare cases, at sub-chief level within the chiefdom, were the indigenous people. The appointing authorities were the local people themselves. However, as a way of respecting the new chief that had taken over the Tumbuka territory, the appointed local leaders had to be approved by the Senga chief. The Senga rarely rejected such appointments made by the Tumbuka rulers. This system of rule made it difficult for the Senga to change the Tumbuka way of life. From this point of view, the Senga had little effect on the Tumbuka way of living.

## CHAPTER NINE

# IMPACT OF THE SENGA ON THE TUMBUKA

The Senga entered the Tumbuka territory in the Luangwa valley almost at the same time the Balowoka were entering Nkhamanga region in northern Malawi. Traditions speak of the Senga coming to this land without women. For this reason, when they settled down they married the local women. Their children got the language of their mothers, Tumbuka. This situation made the Senga lose much of their original language, Bisa. This explains why today, the Tumbuka spoken in Chama district contains between 15 % and 20% Biza and 80% Tumbuka. So, in reality, the Senga have lost their language. The language that they speak is Tumbuka. There is more Bisa in Tumbuka as one goes west of the district, and less of it as one goes east of the district, particularly east of Luangwa River. The opposite is true for the Tumbuka language. For example, Nyimbwa (dog) is Senga, Nchebe is Tumbuka; Nakulu (grandmother) is Senga, Gogo is Tumbuka; Shikulu (grandfather) is Senga, Sekulu is Tumbuka. These are few Bisa words to remind the Senga that they are historically an off-shoot of the Bisa. They also speak faster than the Tumbuka and their accent is sharper, closer to Chi-Bisa than to Chi-Tumbuka.

When the Senga bury the dead in the grave, the tradition is for the dead person's head to point to the west and the legs to the east. This is a historical reminder that they came from the west and settled in the east. For the Tumbuka, the situation is a complete reversal of the Senga. In the grave, the dead person's body *faces* to the north, the *head* points to the east, the *legs* to the west. This is also a reminder for the Tumbuka that they came from the north but entered the Luangwa valley (or the M'nyanjagha kingdom) from the east.
For strategic reasons, after sometime, the Senga abandoned their matrilineal system of inheritance to political power and started the patrilineal system of succession to political power. The Senga patrilineal system is from brother to brother, brother to son or father to son. The Senga subdued the centralised Tumbuka and established chiefs among them. They established a centralised Senga *States* or chiefdoms that began to collect tributes from the Tumbuka 'chiefs' in their respective areas. Beginning with the initial Kambombo *State* under Chibeza, other chiefdoms or *States* were created that covered much of the present Chama district. The following were the main Senga chiefdoms: Mulilo and Chibale to the northwest, Kambombo in the centre, Tembwe, Chikwa, and Chifunda in the south, and Lundu to the west. Themba Katumbi Limilazamba chiefdom (commonly called Katumbi or West Katumbi) under Mlowoka was sandwiched between Mulilo and Kambombo chiefdoms.

Why did the Tumbuka in the Kingdom not organise a military campaign against the Senga after they dethroned chief Chamanyavyose? We shall never know the real reasons. However, field research revealed a number of possibilities. It could be that they were not ready for a war because they did not have adequate resources to fight a war. It could also be that by the end of the 18th century the Balowoka had already weakened the M'nyanjagha who by tradition should have sanctioned a war and organised a military campaign to flush out the

Senga from Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. It could also mean that the Tumbuka were too slow to react and when they wanted to do so, it was too late, they were facing more than one enemy and from different directions. Also, if they did not react militarily to the political interference of the Balowoka in Nkhamanga, why should they do so now that the Senga were interfering in the Chamanyavyose's chiefdom? That was also the period of the disintegration and eventual downfall of the M`nyanjagha and his kingdom.

## CHAPTER TEN

# ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN SENGA-TUMBUKA CHIEFDOMS, 1800 - 1900

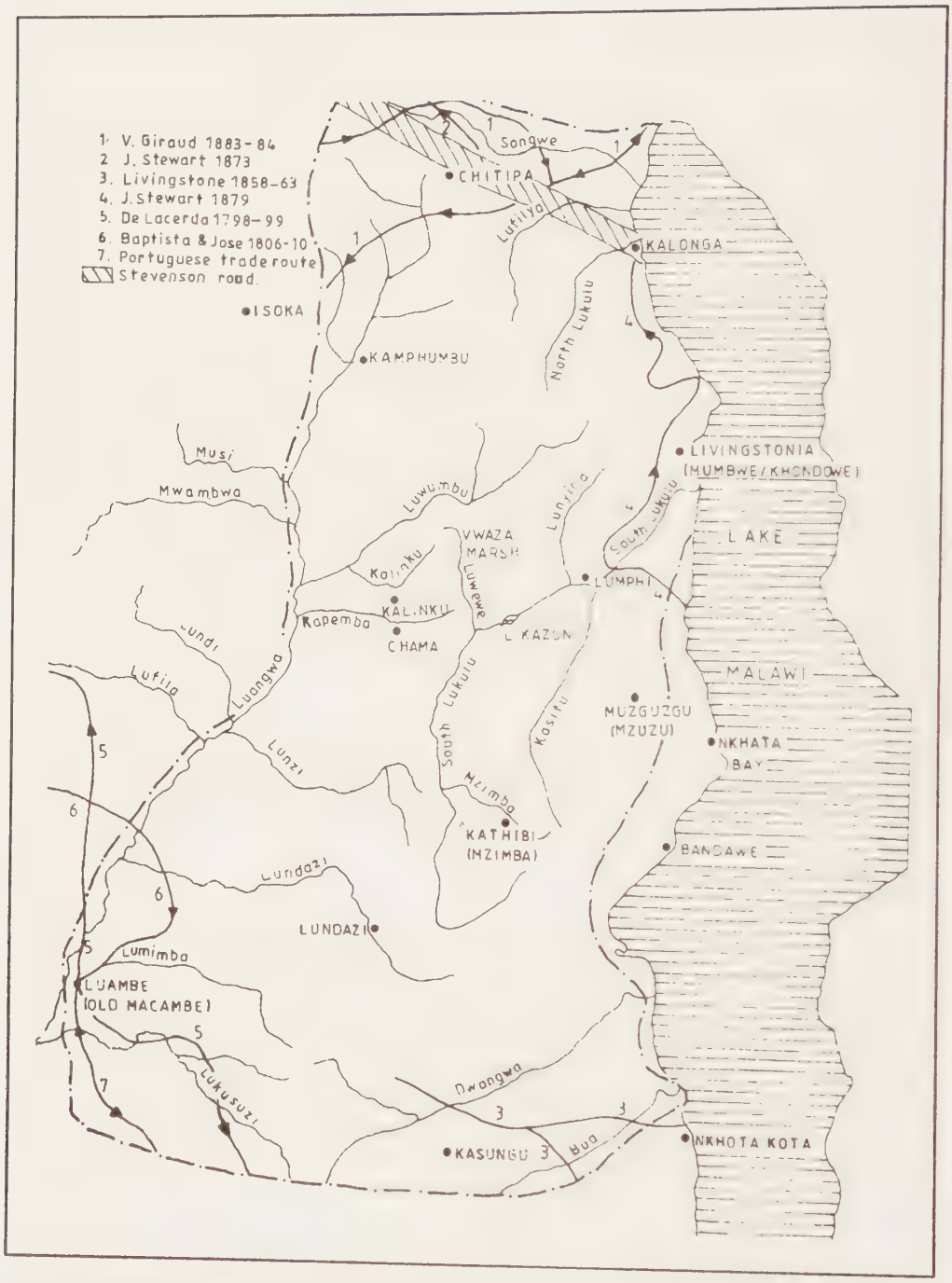
This is an attempt to discuss in an exploratory manner, the economic history of the Tumbuka before 1900. According to records left by early Europeans who lived or passed through the Tumbuka territory, this land had abundant rainfall, rich natural vegetation and many perennial rivers and streams.[40] Most of the rainfall was due to the geographical conditions of the area: much of the Tumbuka land is on high plateau and has many hills and mountains that induce relief or orographic rainfall. Because of the high rainfall received in the kingdom, many rivers broke their banks during the rainy season, and created serious floods in the valleys. The valleys were and still are quite fertile areas because of the silt from the higher areas carried down or brought in by the annual floods. The plateau areas also have good soils that support crop production. High rainfall led to the growth of broad-leaf thick woodlands, especially in the northern areas, while woodland proper covered much of the southern territory. Animal life was abundant and included elephants, rhinos, buffaloes, lions, hippopotamus and small game. Major rivers controlling the drainage system in the kingdom include: Luangwa River and its many perennial tributaries, such as Luwumbu River, one of the major tributaries of the Luangwa River; Kasitu, South Rukuru, Dwambazi, Mzimba and Dwangwa Rivers. Various species of fish are in abundance in these rivers. Many rivers in the northern Tumbuka territory drain their water into Lake Malawi to the east. Rivers on the western edge of Tumbuka territory drain their water into the Luangwa River to the west.

The economic activities of the Tumbuka fall in four parts, namely, agriculture, hunting, gathering and collecting, and trading, mostly through barter. Mining was a very specialised venture and was carried out in few specific areas that had mineral deposits.

## AGRICULTURE

Environment, especially soils and vegetation type, greatly influenced the kind of agriculture followed by the Tumbuka in different parts of their kingdom. Before the invention of iron smelting technology was *widely* spread in the territory, for a very short time, a very small proportion of the Tumbuka used wooden hoes, known as *Gobo*, made from the heart of very hard trees like *Mphangala* and *Mukwa*. With the passage of time, the Tumbuka quickly discovered the knowledge of iron working or learnt the skills of smelting iron ore from the Saan they found inhabiting the territory they came to occupy, and made iron hoes and other farm implements. Initially, the Tumbuka people practised only arable farming. This is because most of them were originally not cattle keepers. The culture of rearing cattle was introduced in their society much later by cattle they got from the Nkhonde people, a segment of the Kalonga wa Nkhonde Tumbuka to the north, bordering with the present Tanzania. Only after the introduction of the cattle from the north did many Tumbuka practise mixed farming. Pastoral farmers concentrated on cattle keeping and rearing of goats. Because of tsetseflies in some parts of the kingdom especially in the valleys,

[40] See Map 8: European Explorers in the Tumbuka Kingdom by 1884.




Map. 8 *European Explorers in the Tumbuka kingdom by 1884*

pastoralism was abandoned in the affected areas and people concentrated on arable farming. Crop production involved growing of three staple crops, namely, millet, both bulrush (Pennistum typhoideum) and finger type (Eleusine coracana), though the former was not very common; red varieties of sorghum (SPP), and sorghum vulgare known as *Dhura* in North Africa. Before 1860, the Tumbuka were not growing maize. This crop was only introduced in the present north-eastern Zambia from 1860, most likely, with seeds 'smuggled' or bought from the Bemba. Red rice (Oryzasativa), an indigenous crop, had been under cultivation long before the introduction of the white rice by the Arabs. Cotton was harvested from the cotton bush that grew wildly in their area. They also grew crops like beans, groundnuts, groundbeans, sweet potatoes and vegetables. Crops were grown mainly in the numerous river valleys. They did not practise the *Chitemene* system of agriculture of their western neighbours, the Bemba. This is when branches of trees are cut down and heaped in one place and later burnt. Crops are cultivated in the many areas where the branches were burnt. The Tumbuka had two distinct seasonal areas where they cultivated crops: during the rain season, they cultivated *rain season crops* in higher grounds, not in river valleys because floods destroyed crops grown in these areas. From the months of May (Vuna) to August (Mpupulu), in suitable areas, they cultivated *dry season crops* in the silt-fertilised river valleys. This system, locally called *Nyata* is still practised by many people to day in some areas. Good examples are the Nyata fields in Luangwa and Luwumbu river valleys. During famine people collected foods from the forests. Such foods included, Nchenja, Nkhazi-kazi, Nchenche, wild millet and Muzimbwe (which is similar to rice but with tiny seeds). Normally, Muzimbwe grows in river valleys. Njowela and Numbu were other wild tubers that people dug up and ate. Numbu (like carrot but white) could be eaten fresh, uncooked or could be cooked.

*Gongwe* (upstairs house) were raised structures with sleeping facilities about six metres above the ground. They were built from very strong hard trees like *Mukwa, M'pani* and *M'phangala*. A permanently fixed ladder to the *Gongwe* assisted them to climb up into the bedroom. Such houses were built around the gardens to guard against the animals trying to enter the fields to eat crops. From the *Gongwe* it was easy to see animals coming to the field, and they immediately began chasing them before they reached the field. This was done mainly at night. At daybreak, the '*Night Crop Guards*' went back to the village to rest. The *Gongwe* was also used during the day, as a point from which the '*Daytime Crop Guards*' threw stones at birds in order to chase them from the field, particularly chasing them away from fields of cereal crops like millet, sorghum and rice.

## HUNTING

The Tumbuka were by tradition great hunters. Oral traditions say that they learnt the art of hunting from the Saan. Hunting was either for their daily protein requirements or in order to barter the meat for items not available in their local areas. In the long run, hunting became so important that it created a stratum in the society comprising the specialist hunters (*Fundi or Chibinda*). Such people were well respected and quite influential in their respective communities. Many of them had acquired or declared certain areas as their specific hunting grounds on which no other hunters could trespass.

Figure 2. *Gongwe*

The thick woodlands of their country, dotted with valleys provided natural sanctuary for many species of wild life. To hunt animals, people had to make weapons. Quantity and quality of weapons depended on both the availability of raw materials to make such weapons and on the local skilled human resource to produce the required weapons. The following were the most common weapons used in their hunting expeditions: nets, *Mahomwa* (large axes in the form of hoes, with a very sharp wide blade), spears (with or without poison), axes, snares, clubs, sticks, dogs, trap pits, fire; and bow and arrows (with or without poison), the *main traditional Tumbuka weapon*. They also used a sticky substance obtained after treating and processing tree sap from Chitonto tree. The finished product was widely known as *Ulimbo* and was used mainly for catching grain-eating birds in the grain fields. It was also common practice among the Tumbuka to undertake group-hunting, locally known as *Chisokole*. They utilised dogs on a large scale in such sessions. However, many professional hunters, (*Chibindas* or *Fundis)* worked individually using family or hired labour.

Animal skins were used in the manufacturing of waist belts, pouches, skin bags, dresses, blankets and so on. However, skins from animals like leopards and lions were sacred items used only by clan leaders, elders, headmen, chiefs, subkings and the King. The same was true for the tail of the Wildbeast that was used in the preparation of a fly-switch for the King only.

## FISHING

Rivers were the sources of fish for people living nearby. Spears, hooks and lines, locally made scooping nets (*Njelo*), and poisoning of water in a specific part of a river in order to kill the fish, and *Chono*, a special type of fish trap, were some of the effective methods of killing fish in the Tumbuka society. Fishing was a leisure time activity done by both women and men in the society. It could be done individually or by using family labour. It could also be undertaken collectively by men alone or women alone or boys and girls together. The use of special fishing baskets was a common feature among fisherwomen. The fish commonly found in the rivers included: breams, kapenta (finger-size white fish, locally known as *nthubi* or *lusipa*), bubble fish, bottle fish, tiger fish, mudsuckers and various small and big white fish. Preservation of fish was done by smoking (fire-drying) it or drying it in the sun on raised platforms. There was much local and regional trade in dried fish.

## GATHERING AND COLLECTING

Gathering and collecting of food from the local environment is probably the oldest human economic activity on Earth. It emerged long before agriculture was known to human beings. The Stone Age societies depended on it for their survival. The Iron Age groups also heavily relied on it. Good examples of people still practising this activity are: the *Saan* currently inhabiting Namib and Kalahari deserts in Namibia and Botswana respectively, the *Khoikhoi* in the Cape Province of South Africa, and the various small ethnic groups, collectively, though, erroneously known as the *Pygmies*, the inhabitants of the Democratic Republic of Congo's equatorial rain forests.

Gathering and collecting as a form of economic activity depended wholly on nature. What the environment provided is what was collected from it. Thus, this activity took place throughout the year, collecting different food items provided by the environment at different seasons in a year. Like elsewhere in pre-colonial Zambia, the Tumbuka were actively engaged in collecting and gathering what their environment offered at different times of the year. In fact, the oral traditions of the Tumbuka have revealed that they found the Saan in the territory that they later inhabited. It is quite possible that, together with the Saan, they gathered and collected food items from their environment.

The usual time for growing crops was and still is the rainy season, between November (Thukila) and April (Masika). Between December (Vula) and February (Muswela) crops were in the fields, not yet ready to be harvested. That was a crucial period of relatively less food in the kingdom. It was for this reason that, at that time, collecting and gathering was very important to supplement shortfalls in food supplies. The following items were collected and gathered by the Tumbuka from their territory annually between November and February: Caterpillars, Mushrooms, Flying ants and Crickets. However, various fruits, roots, pulses, vegetables, insects and honey could be gathered throughout the year. Red locusts (*Zombe*) were periodically collected in some parts of the territory. It must be noted that differences in the environment led to differences in soil types, vegetation types and tree species. What this meant was that within the vast kingdom not all the areas offered the same items at the same time to be gathered. Consequently, one area could offer an item that was not found in the other area, hence the emergence of trade in order to obtain items that were not found in the local environments.

Within each environment there were certain medicinal species of trees useful in the production of various medicines. As a result, there emerged a number of medicinemen and medicinewomen commonly known as *Ng'anga*, who did not only become specialists in identifying medicinal species of trees, but also applied such medicine to treat the sick in society. Consequently, their position in society was elevated and could only be equated to the same position now being enjoyed by *modern* medical doctors in our society.

One other important by-product of Collecting and Gathering was arrow poison (*Ulembe*). It was prepared by mixing sap from the Ulembe tree and other substances including one locally called *Usitwe*. The Luangwa valley had plenty of Ulembe trees hence, much of the arrow poison sold in the Tumbuka kingdom came from this area under subking Chamanyavyose. It was mainly used for killing animals especially the big animals such as hippos, elephants and rhinos. When demand for ivory increased from the mid-eighteenth century, demand for this product also increased. More elephants were killed using the arrow poison. The poison was so deadly that there was unwritten rule: *never store it in the house but always in the bush.*

## MINING AND SMELTING

Mining as an industry was carried out in areas where there were workable mineral deposits mainly iron ore, locally called *Thale*. It is still found in many parts of the Tumbuka territory. Thus, mining was practised in many parts of the kingdom. The following sites were the

**Figure 3.** *Traditional Furnace (Ng'anjo)*

most famous mining and smelting centres in the kingdom: Phopo near Kazuni, Chibuluntha, Chanyoli, Wila (Plateau and Valley), Nkhonjela hill, Mwanda hill, Mpalasa, Kamilang'ombe River in Muyombe, Sitwe, Dambo marsh, Kajimomo hill, Matendo, Zandu, Kavuba (Mphalausenga), lower Kalinku River, Lupamazi, Lubonekela, Mbalachanda hill, Chang'anga, Manda hill, Mwata, Buleya, Chisyununu River, Sangu hill on the way to chief Chikwa in Kholopete area. Other areas include Membe River, Mugwantha in chief Mwase, Jenda, Hora Mountain, Kasito, Lubebwya, Chipeta hill and Matimba near Jombo in Mperembe chiefdom. The most common technique of mining was by open pit method and done secretly using very primitive tools. However, it was not unusual for some mines to be as deep as twenty metres.

In smelting iron ore much labour was required. First of all, the experts had to choose the site where they were going to build the iron ore furnace, locally called, *Ng'anjo*. This was usually on a highland or on an anthill for uninterrupted supply of air (oxygen) for accelerated and better combustion to take place in the furnace. A kiln of about four metres high and two metres wide at the top and slightly wider at the base was erected on a suitable site. The base had earthenware pipes through which passed the waste material. These were closed before the heating process began. Broken pieces of carefully selected iron ore (haematite quartz) were placed in the kiln till it was full. *Diza*, a type of a catalyst or medicine was also put in the *Ng'anjo*. Fuel for the fire to heat and melt the iron ore was charcoal and firewood from hard trees in the woodlands.

The mixture in the furnace was checked and examined at regular intervals. The mixture was heated red-hot for a long time until it was verified ready. Thereafter, the slag or *thale* waste was poured out through the (now opened) earthenware pipes at the base of the furnace. The *thale* waste was called *Mavi* (waste matter or feaces). The smelted metal that remained in the furnace was called *Mukute*. It dropped to the bottom of the furnace. Once the kiln cooled off, the cake of the smelted metal (*Mukate*) was hooked out. It was this metal that metalsmiths forged into a number of items. This method of smelting iron ore was practised everywhere in the Tumbuka kingdom, differing only in minor details. During the smelting process, women were not allowed near the kiln. This was because it was too hot at the smelter and the task required men to be scantly dressed. Also, the community closely guarded the technology of iron smelting. The men involved did not want women to see what was going on for fear that they would leak the secret to other people outside their community. Also, all the men involved were not allowed to have sex with any woman during the tme they were smelting the iron ore. It was a belief that if they had sex, the results would be poor.

## TOOL MANUFACTURING

After the metal was produced, the next stage was the fabrication of usable finished products. Manufacturing or production of various tools from metal is not something new in an Africa society. Egyptians, ancient West Africans and the ancient Zimbabweans, just to mention a few, did it hundreds of years ago. A number of Tumbukas also learned the art of forging metal into a variety of tools. Community metalsmiths forged many articles from the smelted iron. Such articles included the following: spears, ordinary axes, wedge-shaped

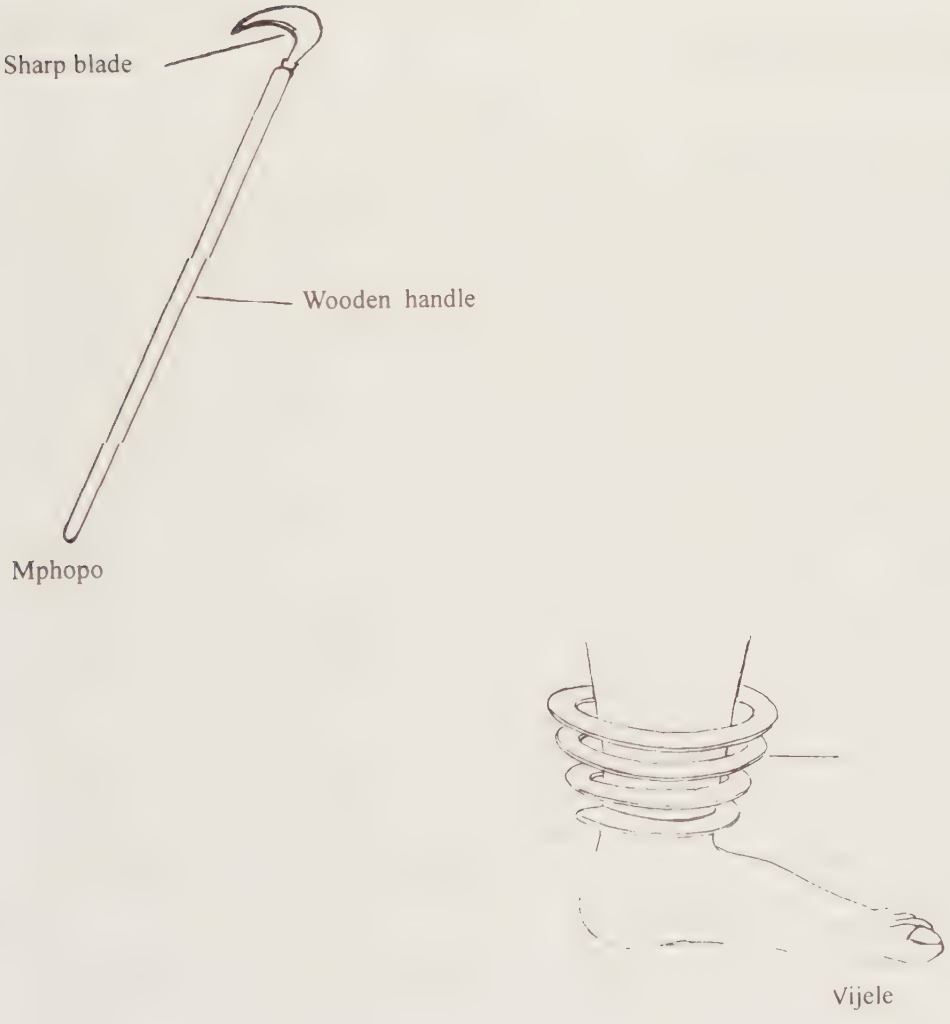



**Figure 4.** *Mphopo and Vijele*

axe blades for hammering out bark-cloth, knives, hoes, hammers, harpoon (*Mphopo*) and barbed spear. Others were *Mahomwa* (large axes in the form of hoes with sharp wide blades), ordinary bangles, ankle bangles exclusively for women (*Vijele*), sickles, arrow-heads and fish-hooks. They also made bracelets mainly for sale. Farming depended on axes and hoes manufactured by metalsmiths in the kingdom. The survival of other industries also depended on tools from the metalsmiths. Tumbuka metalsmiths were very skilled at mechanical repairs and making casting for broken parts of machines. Such skills were very useful and tested from the nineteenth century when guns began circulating in the kingdom. The skilled artisans repaired locally made guns and those bought from the foreigners. They even made new nipples for the guns and repaired gun-locks. [41]

## BARK-CLOTH INDUSTRY

Bark-cloth (*Nyanda or Nkwizu*) production was a noble task exclusively for men in the Tumbuka society. The industry was directly connected to the type of environment in existence. Where there were good woodlands with excellent species of trees for bark-cloth, like *Muyombo or Chiyombo* trees, this industry flourished, as was the case in many parts of the Tumbuka kingdom. The following is a general account of how bark-cloth was made: the barks of selected bark-cloth trees such as Miyombo were carefully removed from the trees and systematically hit with a special club meant for this purpose only. The hitting process produced fresh pulp or strips of fibres that were delicately collected and caustiously sun-dried. Sometimes they were smoked. The dried strips were left to spend a night in water. Thereafter, the process of 'cloth-making' began. It involved joining strips together to make one piece of cloth. Later the cloth was carefully smoothened. Specialists undertook the process of colouring or dying the bark-cloth. First, juice was extracted from the berries of the *Musangati* trees. Thereafter, the bark-cloth was immersed in the juice so collected. Even calico that replaced bark-cloth from the twelfth century was made black through the same process of crushing the berries of the *Musangati* trees and mixing the juice with coal-black swamp mud. Black dyes were also easily obtained from the roots of *Kaminda* shrub. Red colour was extracted from leaves of the *Usisha* tree. Castor oil locally manufactured from caster oil plant (*Mono*) that grew (and still does) naturally in the kingdom especially in the Luangwa valley was an excellent smoothening and beautifying agent for the bark-cloth. The other product for decorating the bark-cloth was red ochre, locally called *Nkhama*. Red ochre was made out of reddish alluvial soil from river valleys. The reddish alluvial substance was filtered and the residual was made into balls that were burned. Besides its use in dying *Nyanda*, the red ochre was used in decorating the clay pots. For this reason, *Mono* and *Nkhama* were in great demand and commanded relatively high price in local and regional trade. Skins of wild animals, goats and cattle supplemented *Nyanda*. Animal skins and hides were carefully treated by local experts to become soft and smooth. In normal situations, women wore *Nyanda* and men wore skins. This was because animal skins withstood the vigour of hunting expeditions undertaken by men. *Nyanda* was not strong enough for such activities.

[41] For details on this read Cullen Gouldsbury and Hubert Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia. Being some impressions of te Tanganyika Plateau* (London: Edward Arnord, 1911), pp. 279-

## HANDCRAFT INDUSTRY

A survey of handicrafts made by the Tumbuka using local materials revealed a general progress, although some of their work lacked perfection and precision. However, people in some parts of the kindgom produced items of very high quality as was the case with the Tumbuka in the Luangwa valley, Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. The difference in quality enhanced trade between those who produced better items and those that produced items of poor quality. Wood materials produced by the Tumbuka included the following: stools, benches, chairs, food containers like wooden plates, hoe-handles, axe-handles, knife handles, drums and walking sticks. Other items were baskets and mats either from reeds, bamboos or bamboo leaves or coconut tree leaves. *Mitaba* and *Miyombo* trees were the main supplies of wood for this important leisure-time industry. The Tumbuka were known for their very high quality mats and baskets that were the envy of their neighbours.

Spinning and weaving were other important activities among the Tumbuka. A spindle whorl was used to spin the thread from the raw cotton. The western part of the kingdom, especially the Luangwa valley had plenty of wild cotton. After spinning, they used the threads to weave cloth.

Pottery, especially pot-making, was exclusively a task for women and depended on the availability of clay of specific quality. Fortunately, such clay was found in many parts of the kingdom, hence, the industry was undertaken everywhere in the territory. Nets (*vilepa and njelo*) were also made locally from local fibres and cotton threads.

## SALT-MAKING INDUSTRY

Chibwa salt-pans in Mpika became the largest salt-making centre west of the Tumbuka kingdom. In *Utumbuka*, there were many salt-pans as well, from which a lot of salt was produced. Salt-makers gathered in the salt-pans during the dry season, the covenient salt-making season. The following was the process in the manufacturing of salt in the salt-pans. First, grass in the salt-pans was cut. It was then carefully sun-dried. Later it was burned in such a way as to produce cinders or ashes. The ashes were gathered and put in large earthenware pots prepared by women. The pot was in the shape of an inverted cone. It was suspended from a post and filled with cinders containing salt. Water was poured on the cinders in the vessel and it percolated through them and ran out at the small holes at the bottom of the pot. The filtered salty water was caught in a wooden trough placed under the vessel to receive it. The salty water was poured in new pots. The pots were put on the fire and salty water boiled until it evaporated leaving salt at the bottom. To get the salt, the pot was broken and the cake of salt so obtained was dried thoroughly. The salt was white in colour.

Where there were no salt-pans in the kingdom, salt was obtained from streams. This was alluvial or rock salt. An ordinary size ball of rock salt was called *Mpinda*. A big ball was called *Chipinda*. Salt was also obtained from a kind of potash made from ashes secured by burning certain reeds, grasses or maize stalks (from the 20th century). There are some parts

**Figure 5.** ***Salt-making in process at Puta in Luapula province.***

in the kingdom where such type of salt is still manufactured to day. The skills of manufacturing the salt have been passed on from one generation to the other by word of mouth up to this day.

## LOCAL, REGIONAL AND LONG DISTANCE TRADE

The Tumbuka actively participated in local, regional, and long distance trade in Central Africa. They traded with the Bisa and Bemba on the western border; the Chewa and the Portuguese or the Chikunda, the Portuguese agents on the southern border; the Nkhonde to the north; the Lakeshore Tonga to the east, and the Arabs (*Balungwana*) and the Swahili from the East Coast.

Local or regional trade used more or less similar goods from each participating society. However, long distance trade focused on exotic goods that appeared in the Tumbuka society for the first time. Slaves and ivory were the main items of trade from the Tumbuka territory in the long distance trade, mainly with the Arabs and the Swahili, from mid 19th century.

I ocal trade was the exchange of goods between people within the same local environment, such as between villages. Regional trade was the exchange of goods between chiefdoms of the same society or with neighbouring societies, such as between the Tumbuka chiefdoms and those of the Bemba and Chewa chiefdoms. Long distance trade took place between people of different regions. It involved foreign goods from distant places, such as trade between the peoples of East and Central Africa.

## LOCAL TRADE

The Tumbuka organised their local trade very well and it benefited many people in the kingdom. They produced different goods of high quality and sold them within their communities scattered all over the vast territory. The following trade items were in circulaton: fresh and dried wild fruits; bark cloth (*Nyanda*); salt; iron tools and weapons such as axes, spears and knives. Others were bangles (*Vikono* or *Makhoza*) of different types such as, ivory bangles, iron bangles, elephant hoof bangles, bangles made from buffalo skins (*Vikombe*) and bangles or rings made from elephant or buffalo hair, especially hair from their respective tails. There was also trade in clay pots; tobacco; honey; cattle; goats; chickens; millet meal; dried meat and various foods.

Red or copper bangles, locally called *Mikuwa* or iron bangles, locally called *Mbizi*, were very important ornaments in society. They were exclusively for women who wore them on the wrists or on the ankles. The cylindrical ankle bangles, locally called *Vijele*, produced some nice sound as the woman walked. When bangles were initially introduced, only members of the royalty wore them. However, later on, people outside royalty were allowed to wear them.

Prices of items differed from one area to the another depending on the laws of supply and demand. Many transactions were on barter system. Oral evidence has revealed that the Tumbuka also practised silent trade but it did not last for a long time. Research has only revealed prices for some items. For example, two pieces of bark-cloth were exchanged with one chicken; one ordinary-size hoe could buy two chickens, but a big hoe bought three chickens; a goat fetched four hoes; six hoes bought a cow. Three hoes were enough as marriage payment, in the Tumbuka traditional marriages. A medium-sized clay pot was bartered with three chickens. A ball of rock salt, *Mpinda*, was exchanged with one hoe. These prices give a general picture of the cost of the goods in the local trade.

## REGIONAL TRADE

Before the arrival of the *Senga* in Chamanyavyose's kingdom, the Tumbuka traded with the Bisa and the Bemba in regional trade. From these two neighbours, the Tumbuka bought arrow poison (*Ulembe*) mounted on the spearhead or on the arrowhead (locally known as Ncheto), a speciality of the Bisa, particularly the ones from Kambwiri area. They also bought regionally known Chibwa salt and, copper bangles (*Mbizi*), most likely imported from Katanga in the present Democratic Republic of Congo. After 1780 the Senga tookover Chamanyavyose's chiefdom in the Luangwa valley. As a result of this, after 1800, the Senga are the ones that supplied the Tumbuka with these items. In addition, the new-comers sold the Tumbuka a number of quality products, such as, baskets, reed mats and tobacco. One big ball of tobacco fetched one hoe. The Tumbuka also supplied them with castor oil and cloth made locally from wild cotton. Spinning and weaving were other important activities among the Senga that they copied from the Tumbuka. From the Chewa, especially of Mwase Kasungu and Mwase Mphangwe, the Tumbuka bought salt and arrow poison. Through trade, the Tumbuka were able to acquire enough cattle and learnt the culture of cattle-keeping. The Lakeshore Tonga, neighbours on the east, supplied them with salt and dried fish. The items that the Tumbuka produced for their local trade were the same ones they sold in the regional trade.

## LONG DISTANCE TRADE

In the long distance trade the Tumbuka had contacts with the Arabs and the Swahili from the East Coast, the Balowoka from across Lake Malawi, and the Portuguese or their agents, the Chikunda from the south, in the lower Zambezi valley. The Portuguese brought calico for sale. For two bundles of their calico, they got one adult slave from the Tumbuka. Calico was a very precious item in the society. It was stored in a cylindrical container made from the bark of a tree inside the roof of the roof. This was to avoid being eaten by ants. A bundle of cloth or calico was known by various names, such as, *Mutumba, Gola* or *Utaka*. A piece of ivory was exchanged for three bundles of cloth. Pumbulu Bota, a specialist elephant hunter (Fundi or Chibinda) sold a lot of ivory to the Arab traders who came to Lundazi area.[42] For their own survival, the Arabs bought various food-stuffs from the

[42] Fergus Macpherson, 'Seminar-Workshop on Oral Records of Local History', held at Lundazi, 24th-25th June, 1972, p.65.

**Table 1. Regional and Long Distance Trade pattern in the Tumbuka kingdom up to 1750.**

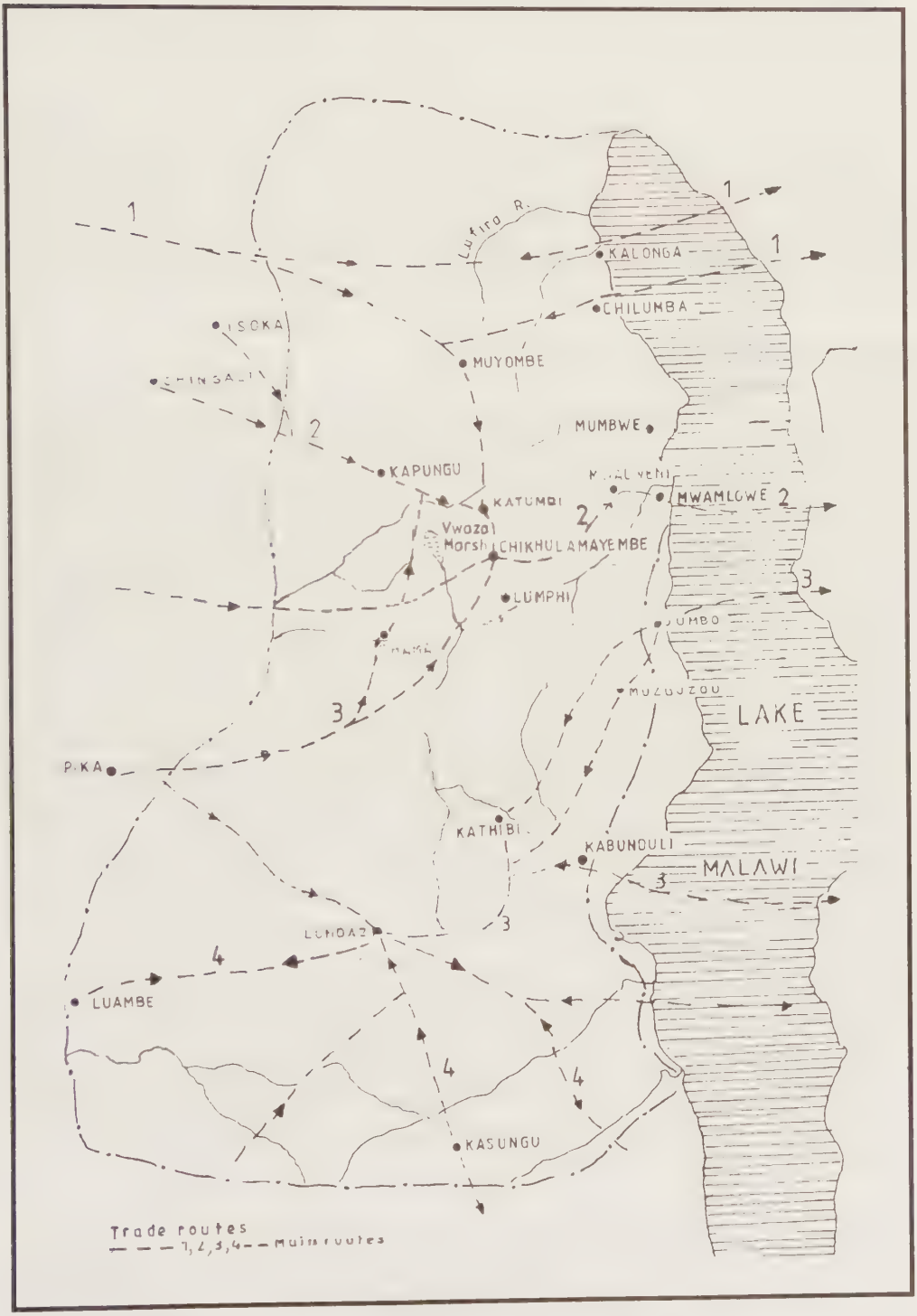
| Producers | Exports* | Exported to | Imports* | Imported from |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tumbuka** | Nyanda, local cotton cloth, tobacco, grain, mats, ivory, arrow poison, food-stuff and arrowheads | Bisa, Bemba, Chewa, Lakeshore Tonga, and Nkhonde | Local salt, sea salt, tobacco, grain, iron tools, arrow poison, beads, calico, basketry, guns and ammunition | Bemba, Bisa, Arabs, Swahili and Portuguese |
| **Bemba and Bisa** | Arrow poison, local salt, bark-cloth, ivory, iron tools and dried meat | Tumbuka, Portuguese, Chikunda, Arabs and Swahili | Guns, ammunition, beads, tobacco, grain, fish, calico,Sea salt and basketry | Tumbuka, Arabs, Swahili, Portuguese, Namwanga, Lungu and Chikunda |
| **Arabs, Swahili and Portuguese** | Beads, guns, ammunitions, sea salt, tobacco, calico and sea shells | Tumbuka, Bisa, Bemba, Chewa, Lungu, Nkhonde and Namwanga | Grain, ivory, slaves, dried meat, goid and food-stuff | Tumbuka, Bemba, Chewa, Bisa, Chikunda and Nkonde |

*Not necessarily arranged in the order of who produced the items, exported them or imported them.

Tumbuka. That was because sometimes they stayed in the kingdom for up to a year doing business. For more details on items of trade and trade routes see Table 1 and Map 9.

From the Arabs, the Swahili and the Balowoka, the Tumbuka bought exotic goods like beads, calico, copper bangles including the *Vijele* ankle bangles exclusively for women, (these were also locally made) guns, gun powder and ammunition; trinkets, dried sea fish, and sea salt. Slaves, ivory and food-stuffs were the major items of trade they bought from the Tumbuka. They also bought buffalo, rhino and Kudu horns. Thus, ivory and slaves were not for local or regional trade but almost entirely for the long distance trade. Tobacco powder, also known as snuff tobacco brought by the Arabs was exchanged for slaves. Pressed (*Magoda or Chambwa*) tobacco was exchanged for millet meal and other food-stuffs. From the eighteenth century slave trade was the main type of trade in this area and seriously devastated the Tumbuka. That was the time the Balowoka decided to permanently settle in the Tumbuka kingdom from 1785. They also greatly contributed to its disintergration politically in the first quarter of the 19$^{th}$ century.

Figure 6. *Slaves from northeastern colonial Zambia on their way to the East Coast*




Map 9. *Nineteenth century Trade Routes in the Tumbuka Kingdom*

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES

### MARRIAGE

Traditionally, in the olden days, before the arrival of the Balowoka, there were two ways of of marrying among the Tumbuka. There was marriage arranged by *parents* (parents'choice) locally known as *nthengwa yakufikizga* and marriage by *personal choice* called *nthengwa yakufikila.* However, with the coming of the western culture, arranged marriages gradually gave way to marriages by personal choice. This time, it is very rare to come across marriages arranged by parents in the Tumbuka society.

### MARRIAGES ARRANGED BY PARENTS

If a family had boys and girls of marriageable ages, members of the family looked around in the *community* for girls to be married by their boys or boys to marry their daughters. They looked for boys and girls from good families. These were families that had respectful people and had not been linked in anyway to witchcraft. They also went for very hardworking people in the community. Young men and women who were hardworking and respectful to elders usually married soon after puberty than those that were rude and lazy. Marriages between cousins were very common among the Tumbuka who were also polygamous. There were no *marriage payments* in the marriages between cousins.

In the olden days the Tumbuka married from within the village or the chiefdom. It was very rare to marry from distant places. Chiefs or subkings never married from very far, especially the first wife. Intermarriages with the neghbouring peoples were there but initially quite rare. With the passage of time, intermarriages became frequent *especially* between the Tumbuka and the bordering people such as the Chewa, the Bisa, the Bemba, the Namwanga, the Nkhonde and the Lakeshore Tonga. From the end of the 18th century, there were intermarriages between the Tumbuka and the incoming groups of people such as the Balowoka, the Senga and the Ngoni.

Once the parents of the boy agreed to have their son marry a girl they identified from a certain family, they quickly arranged for someone to go to the village of the girl. The purpose of this trip was to *spy* on the girl and confirm that she was *indeed* a good and cultured girl for their son to marry. The girl's family was aware of the secret probe, but did not know exactly the person who was to undertake the reconnaissance trip. The boy was also not aware that his parents were arranging marriage for him. But as a rule, children never objected to their parents' choices.

The advantage of undertaking the reconnaissance trip secretly was that if the 'spy' reported negatively about the girl and the whole project was abandoned by the boy's family, no harm would be created between the two families. There would be no reason to cause a breach of friendly relations between the two families.

However, if the 'spy' reported positively, members of the boy's family quickly met and discussed the issue and appointed someone who was to represent the family in the marriage arrangements with the girl's family. A family representative or a *go-between* in the marriage arrangements is locally called *Nkalamba* or *Thenga.* He went to the girl's family, usually in the afternoon, and broke the news about the marriage proposal from the boy's family. It was also not uncommon for the *go-between* to go very early in the morning and knock at the door of the girl's parents' house. The knock was an expression that their daughter was going to the family of very hardworking people who start work very early in the mornig before all the people come out of their houses. The girl's family called its core family members to discuss the marriage proposal. The response was usually given to the Thenga from the boy's family, the following day. As a host, the girl's family gave food and accommodation to the Thenga.

The following morning, the Thenga was given the response of the girl's family. If it was negative, he was told in a diplomatic way that the girl was already committed with another man. They said that the girl was already 'shut off '. That was a polite way of saying '*no*' to the marriage proposal and it marked the end of the marriage issue between the two families. If the answer was positive, the Thenga was told that the girl's family had accepted the marriage proposal. The positive response from the girl's family allowed the boy's family to meet again and discuss the next steps to take. First, the boy was called and told of his future wife. He may have heard about her or known her or not. That did not matter. The important thing was that the girl was to be his future wife whether he liked it or not. Second, marriage instructions for the boy began thereafter in order to adequately prepare him for marriage. The family or clan elders took up this responsibility. Third, the boy was told not to go closer to the future parent-in-laws. The '*fearing*' taboos by the boy were immediately enforced. If he saw his future parent-in-laws, he was supposed to avoid coming closer to them. If they were coming from the opposite direction on the same path, he was supposed to give way and hide a distance away off the path. Fourth, the boy was advised very strongly against meeting his future wife or play with her in anyway. 'No young couple were permitted to keep company until after the offer and acceptance of goods, and the right of property had been established'. Kissing each other in public was an unthinkable feat. In fact, it was not there! Courting or sex before marriage was punishable offence. It also brought shame to the affected families and that was considered more 'punishment' to the families than anything else and they were treated like 'cursed' families in the community. The boy's family paid heavily for the offence.

[43] The other version of this tradition is that the arrow is aimed at the trunk of a tree, not in the ground. This is because according to this version aiming the arrow in the ground meant that the man decided to divorce his wife. He shoots the arrow in the ground and it should remain stuck there at an angle, preferably 45 degrees angle, signifying the decision to divorce.

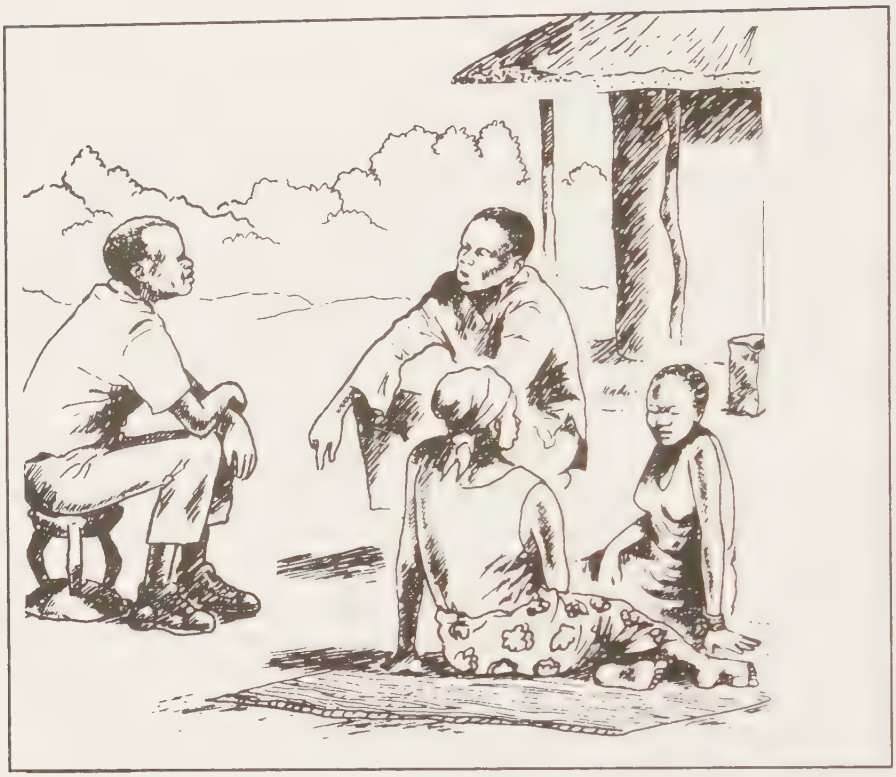


Figure 7. *Elders in the girl's family discussing marriage proposal from the boy's family*

The other thing the boy's family discussed was the payment of *Chimalo*, the main marriage payment. Before this was paid, there were other small preliminary payments. The first preliminary payment was called *Chamulomo* or *Chijula mulomo* (*the payment that opens (jula) the mouth (mulomo) to start talking*). That was the preliminary payment for the *actual* serious discussions on the marriage issue between the two families to begin. It was usually a hoe or a chicken. It was quickly organised and taken to the girl's family by the Thenga. If the girl's family thought that the *Chijula mulomo* was not adequate, they asked for some more items. However, such a situation was quite rare.

The family members of the woman to be married, particularly the father or her uncles decided the amount of full marriage payment, *Chimalo (also known as Thumba)*, to be paid by the boy's family. Normally, the initial figure was always subject to serious negotiations with the man's family led by its representative. In all marriages, the initial marriage payment, Chijula mulomo, was the most important one. Once it was paid, the marriage was sanctioned. The *accepted full* marriage payment included beads, chickens, goats and hoes. Normally, three hoes were sufficient as full marriage payment. The first of the main payment (*Chimalo*) was usually a traditionally manufactured hoe tied with a string of local (later imported white) beads and covered in *Nyanda* taken to the parents of the girl by the representative of the man's family. Any local hoe that was used in marriage payment was called *Sabili*.

Once the girl's family accepted the *Chijula mulomo*, the boy's family began fulfilling specific traditional marriage obligations required of them. For instance, the boy was told to go and build a house in the village of the girl's family where he will be living with his wife *after all* the marriage procedures were *completed*. He was also told to start working for his parents-in-law to prove himself that he was *capable* of supporting the wife or living with their daughter without experiencing food shortages because of his failure to grow enough food for the family. He worked for them for a considerable time before the next stage was initiated. Sometimes, his friends came to assist him. While there, his mother-in-law was responsible for all his meals. The girl did most of the cooking of the food sent to his house. The boy was not all the time staying in the girl's village. He sometimes went back to his village in the evening after a day's work and came back the following morning to accomplish the task or came back when he was assigned another task.

When the girl's family was satisfied with the boy's performance, it arranged to officially start the final procedures for the marriage. The family appointed elderly women (usually the *Bazamba*) from the village to go to the boy's village and bring the boy to the girl's village. Somehow, the boy's side was made aware of the day when the women from the girl's family would be arriving. The women entered the boy's village with a special slow processional step and announced the purpose of their trip in peace meal form. That was a way of getting presents from the boy's family. The members of the boy's family paid for each processional movement forward by the group from the girl's family. Payments were normally in small quantities of items such as beads and bangles. The ceremony was known as *Kuwongozga*.

After the 'entering the villge' ceremony, the party from the girl's village was given some food and drinks. After the meals, they rested and chated with the people in the village. While that was happening, the boy was told by his members of the family to get ready for the journey to the girl's village. He was later handed over to the women who left with him to the girl's village, where preparations were going on to officially welcome him. Among the things the boy carried to the girl's village were a bow and an arrow, a symbol of a cultured well-instructed man in traditional Tumbuka society. In most cases the boy was accompanied by some friends and close members of the family both men and women. As the whole group approached the girl's village, the boy began the slow processional steps. Each movement forward was paid for in presents like beads.

As the boy came in full view of the merry-makers, he aimed and shot his arrow in the ground.[1] The arrow was expected to *stick* in the ground at an angle and remain like that, not *falling* on the ground. As it stuck in the ground, the action was highly acclaimed by the onlookers. This *successful* action signified his *strength* as a man. There and then, the *man* was given a piece of grass by a member of the girl's family that he again *successfully* broke into six pieces, to the approval of the witnesses in the village. This action meant that he had passed a test of *bravery*. The bystanders, most of whom were part of the merry-makers, clapped hands in appreciation of what the man had just done.

In the village, he was particularly welcome by members of the girl's family. A grand reception was organised for him, at which beer was one of the drinks served to him. His wife was not present at this reception. That night, he slept in his house, the one he built earlier, together with the friends that accompanied him. The following day, he was served food prepared by his mother-in-law. The same day he sent message through an elderly person of the village to his parents-in-law requesting to see his wife. As a rule, the messenger of this message carried a present from the son—in-law to the parents-in-law.

In the evening, seniour women of the village, usually the *Bazamba*, together with a few girls went to the house of the girl's parents and collected the girl. Together, they went to the husband's house. In the house, they found the man with his companions. Together, they chated for a long time, usually up to the early hours of the following morning. After that, they *all* left the house, leaving the boy *alone*. The chating session was primarily for the elderly women to assess the suitability of the man. If for some reasons, during the chating session, the senior women did not approve the match between the man and the woman, they quickly declared and announced to the parents of the girl that the marriage was null and void. There and then everything could come to an end. If all was well, things proceeded as per tradition.

Few days later, he again asked to see his wife through the same process. A present was again sent together with the message. That time, the girl's family got ready for a full ceremony of 'housing'. This was the ceremony at which the girl is officially taken to the man's house. Invitations *by word of mouth* were sent to the members of the man's family to attend the important ceremony. On the day of the ceremony, many activities took place in the girl's village in readiness for the arrival of the people from her husband's village. At this special occasion, the girl wore a beautiful goatskin, and was also adorned with millet meal sprinkled on the face. She also covered her wrists with attractive pieces of specially treated *Nyanda*. The couple's house was also skillfully cleaned and ready for occupation by the newly married. This was a day of grand merry-making in the girl's village. The people from the girl's village, those from the man's village and invited guests together drank traditional beer, danced and enjoyed themselves all day and all night till the following morning.

The people from the boy's village arrived on the day of the ceremony. As per tradition, they entered the village in slow processional steps. Usually, this was in the late afternoon or early evening. They went to where the girl was and invited her to go with them to the house where the ceremony was to take place: the boy's house. In the house was a mat spread on the floor. The girl entered the house in slow processional steps, each time hesitating to enter until presents or more presents were given to her. After more presents were given to her, she went in but did not sit down on the mat until more presents were given to her. She sat on the mat and the boy was also made to sit on the girl's side. Both had their heads bowed, a sign of respect at such occassions, and won the admiration all

[44] This ceremony of giving advice to the couple could be done either in the afternoon or evening as explained, or early in the morning the following day.

those who have come to witness the event. The house was filled with married men and women. Each of the onlookers individually gave advice to the couple on how to face the new life they were entering into. After sometime, they all filed out of the house and left the

Figure 8. *Advice-giving ceremony a morning after marriage*

couple alone to have their first night together. [44] That was the first time each one of them had sex.

Outside the house people were dancing and feasting throughtout the night. They danced the marriage dances, namely, Mbeleka and Chondo (also known as Mkocho). These dances are explained in detail below under an appropriate heading. In the morning, the elderly women from the *man's family* came into the couple's house. They took the girl to a place where they bathed and anointed her. They brought the girl back in the house and asked the boy if he was satisfied with the performance of the girl on their first night. This was to confirm the virginity of the girl and consequently endorsing her position as a properly instructed (*kasi ngwa kulangwa*!) woman or not. If the man's answer was negative, the whole question of the marriage was re-opened, and could even be cancelled. But if the man's answer was positive, the man's group left happily back to their village. The girl's family in the village was also very happy that things went well. A girl who had sex before marriage created many problems for her family at this time.

Few months after the wedding, the man's father went to the village of his son's wife where his son lived with his wife. He went there pretending to be looking for his son. But the main purpose for his trip was to acquant himself with the community in the village where his son was living. That was a trip specifically for him to assess the type of relationship there was between him and his new relations, the ones in the family of his daughter-in-law. As per tradition he was welcome by the men of the village including those from the family of his daughter-in-law. They ate food and drank beer together. In the evening of the same day he went back to his village.

As a result of the marriage, there developed a strong relationship, usually a good one, between parents of the wife and parents of the husband. The term or concept, *Basebele*

describes the relationship between the parents of the couple. It was also a *term* commonly used by *parents* of the *husband* in referrence to *parents* of the *wife* and *vice versa*. That is to say, the *wife's parents* called the *husband's parents* as their *Basebele* and *vice-versa*. The man lived in the wife's village for two to three years within which he was expected to complete the remaining marriage payment (*Chimalo*). During this time, he worked for his own family and the family of his wife. Again, this was to prove that he was a good son-in-law and capable of keeping their daughter properly. The family of the wife allowed the husband to go with his wife to his village permanently if they proved him to be of good behaviour and hardworking. The permission was only granted after he had completed paying the Chimalo. Such payments were in fact redemption payments for the husband. This is discussed below under Mtupa Claim. It was also a general cultural practice among the Tumbuka that if the first wife was unable to conceive, and yet the husband was very good to her and her family, the wife's family gave the husband another woman as a second wife. Usually, this was her younger sister. This second woman (wife) was called *Mbiliya*.[45] She was a gift from the family of the wife who is unable to conceive. He did not pay any marriage payments to the family of the *Mbiliya*. However, if her husband's behaviour and conduct were not good, the families concerned officially discontinued the marriage.

Living in the wife's village was called *Ukweni*. Practically, the term *Mukweni* meant son-in-law as opposed to *Mukamwana*, daughter-in-law. The son-in-law was generally known as the *Mukweni* of the parents of his wife, or the *Mukweni* of the family of his wife, and also generally as the *Mukweni* of the people in the village. The same was true for the daughter-in-law.

By tradition, the children the couple produced were for his wife's family, especially her uncles, to whom all the children in any matrilineal society like that of the *original* Tumbuka belonged. They were the property of the wife's family. The man's nephews and nieces came to live with him in the village of his wife's family. During field research we were told that sometimes, after the couple lived in wife's village for many years and had many children there, the man did move back to his village together with his wife and his nephews and nieces, but left his biological children with wife's uncles. Although this was the original custom, as the Tumbuka gradually became more complex [or gravitating towards patrilineal system], this was quite rare. In most cases, before they left, his parents-in-law (wife's parents) gave them one of the couple's own biological children, usually, a daughter. This child was commonly known as, *Chinyolola pa muwongo* or *Chinyolola pa musana*. What it actually meant was that, 'the man was now tired and had *twisted* his *back* to produce the children, he must, therefore, be given a child to *straighten* it'. Back in his own village, he could marry as many women as he could afford the *Chimalo*.

## MARRIAGE BY PERSONAL CHOICE

[45] The Ngoni who settled among the Tumbuka from 1860s had the same practice. The name for the second woman (wife) is *Hlazi*. Either they copied this practice from the Tumbuka or they brought it from Zululand.

In the marriage by personal choice, the boy identifies the girl he wants to marry on his own and thereafter, the process is the same as explained above. The parents takeover the whole process. It was clear during the field interviews that in the pre-Balowoka era, *marriageable girls, Ba Mwali were not* accommodated in houses *exclusively* meant for them in *each* the village. But the girls in *each family* slept in their own house built for them by the family. The same was true for the boys who built their own house.

Boys and girls in a particular community met and talked to each other in many convenient places. They met at ceremonies such as *Uzamba*, marriage ceremonies or at other festivals in the community. Afterward, the boys investigated secretly the conduct, behaviour and character of the girls they wanted to marry. They also investigated the characteristics of the families of the girls they fell in love with. At an appropriate time, a boy who wanted to propose marriage to a girl he fell in love with went to the house of the girl in a specific family location in the village at a convenient time. In the house, normally in the company of a colleague and in the evening, they had discussions with the girl for a long time. These 'secret' meetings went on, sometimes, for several days, till they concluded their discussions. At each time she was visited, the host prepared food for the young men. In most cases, the girl was never alone, she had a companion to assist her and act as a witness to the discussions.

The discussions were usually done in riddles or parables (Ntalikà). For example, instead of saying 'I do not love you', the girl said, '*the needle is blunt*'. If she wanted to find out the person who her own family go-between will meet in the boy's family, she said, '*where will I land*'? Later in the 19th century, this changed to '*where will the aeroplane land*'? The opening conversation went like this:

*Na muntu ndine, tambala nchiyuni. Nkuti nichite chakuzgula, chakutema chikusunda yayi. Usange wanitemwa utaye kumutowa, nitowele mwemwe, pala wanipata unitaye ku chizgala [chizala], nizalile banji. Translated as:* I am a human being, the cock is a bird. What I want is to take you altogether, not take you and throw you off. If you love me say it out and I will be attractive to you, when you reject me throw me on the ash [garbage] heap that I may have value for others.[46]

Immediately the girl accepted his proposal for marriage, the boy gave her a present to express his happiness and as a declaration of his serious commitment to the marriage proposal. The present was called Chikhole. This was equivalent to an engagement ring in our modern world and it consisted of any small amount of presents of less value. However, from the time of foreign beads, Chikhole comprised small amount of beads of various colours. The girl gave the present to her aunt or to an elderly woman in her family as proof of her acceptance of the marriage proposal. Her aunt (or the elderly woman) knew exactly what it meant to have such presents from her niece. Thereafter, the aunt informed the parents of the girl and she simultaneously took up the task of teaching the 'engaged' niece about marriage life in preparation for the coming marriage. The boy also informed members of his family who on hearing

[46]Thomas Cullen Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples* (Livingstonia: The Mission Press, 1931), p. 83. The wording has been changed slightly in some parts.

the good news quickly began arranging the traditional marriage procedures as explained above on Marriage arranged by Parents.
In the same vein, if the girl accepted the proposal, as an expression of happiness and serious commitment to the marriage proposal, she gave the man a present. This could be any small item of less value. The item was called *Chidani*. However, from the advent of foreign beads, *Chidani* consisted of white beads. These were knit in such a way as to form something like a strap of a wristwatch. Similarly, *Chidani* was something like an engagement ring in our modern society. Any man wearing *Chidani* was telling the members of his community that he was affianced.

A headman, chief, subking or King married any woman he wanted in the community. He also paid *Chimalo* but for him it was paid in full at once. Because of this and his status, he never lived in the wife's village. There were virtually no marriages by elopement (a situation where a man takes a woman as his wife without following the marriage procedures and runs away with her to his village) in the ancient Tumbuka society. This was because experience had shown that such 'forced'marriages led to interclan fights.

If a wife died and the husband was a good person to the wife's family, the deceased's family looked for a replacement for him. It could be a young sister of the deceased or another woman in the family. She became the new wife of the man to take care of the children the deceased left behind. The replacement woman was called *Kajula Mpinga [Kajula Mphinga]* (the 'door' opener) or *Chituntulo or Chimeta masisi (the one to cut the husband's hair or to help the husband in many tasks)*. What it meant was that the woman had come to help the remaining husband, the widower. In appreciation, the man's family gave presents to the dead wife's family, normally, chickens and pots.

If a husband died, the deceased husband's family organised a replacement to marry the surviving wife. Usually, it was a younger brother, a nephew or any close relative. The widow was given a chance to choose a husband from among the dead husband's relatives. The choice was made at the [head] hair-cutting ritual in the presence of members of her family and the family of her dead husband. The widow chose the man by inviting him to cut her hair. The man who cut her hair became her husband. The other method was for the widow (*Chokolo*) to collect her deceased husband's axe or spear and give it to the man she wants to inherit her. If she gave the spear or the axe to her son, it meant that she did not want to be inherited. Such cases were very rare indeed. If the young brother of the deceased was not available or did not want to inherit the widow, which was very rare, the widow had a choice from her deceased husband's cousins. The children born in that house were not for the cousin who inherited the widow. They were considered to be the children of the deceased person. They took the surname of the deceased person. For example, if Mkandabile inherits Nyirenda's wife, the children that Mkandabile will have with the widow will use the surname Nyirenda and not Mkandabile. The cultural explanation is that Mkandabile is

[47] Note that inheritance was not only for the widows left by their dead husbands. It was also extended to the wife of any *Machona* (Returned Labour Migrant) who had overstayed in the centres of employment. His young brother or cousin could inherit the wife he left in the village.

just continuing where Nyirenda stopped. Inheriting a widow is called *Kupyana* (inherit). However, the term *Chokolo* is always for a widow or an *inherited* woman.[47] A small present from the new husband that was not considered as marriage payment, but as a confirmation of the new arrangement was given to the family of the inherited widow in the presence of witnesses. The practice of inheriting widows is still going on today in the modern Tumbuka society. However, its future is in danger because of the deadly disease, HIV-AIDS. However, in the past, if there was nobody in the deceased man's family to marry the widow, a very unusual situation indeed, she was left free to marry anyone she fell in love with within the community.

From the time of the Ngoni in *Utumbuka*, marriage of a *Mwali* was announced by a Food ceremony. The Tumbuka copied this system from the Ngoni. The girl prepared food with the assistance of the *Bazamba*, and the food was traditionally sent to her prospective parents-in-law. The relish for such food was always a village chicken, the *diginified* relish at such occasions. The chicken was prepared in a special traditional way. The front part of the chicken was cut open. The head, gizzard (*Nyondo* or *Chihururu*) and liver (*Chibindi* or *Chifu*) were all left in position. The chicken was cooked as a whole and adorned with beads on the leg and on the neck. The gravy from the cooking of the chicken was kept and served separately. Sometimes, additional relish such as mushroom and fish were prepared and served in separate plates. The girl was not allowed to taste the food she prepared. The *Bazamba* showed her the favourite dishes of her future husband.[48] All the food prepared by the bride was taken to the prospective parents-in-law by the elderly women. This time the girl was commonly called *Mwali wa kulangwa*, the trained maiden. All the time when she was preparing food she wore clothes that made her be noticed that she was not yet pregnant. However, after the food reached the future parents-in-law, she went back and wore her usual clothes and ornaments.

## MARRIAGE DANCES

While on the topic of marriage, let us explain in detail the two marriage dances performed by the ancient Tumbuka. These were *Mbeleka* and *Chondo*, also known as *Mkocho*. Both dances were performed at night in the village of the girl getting married and normally outside the house of the newly married couple. The Mbeleka dance was also called the *Reed* dance, a name derived from the musical instruments made from the reeds. Dry reeds were bored and partially filled with some dry sand. The dancers, each holding the reed, struck their reeds on the ground. The action produced a melody similar to that produced by modern tambourine. The Mbeleka marriage dance was for adult males and females only. They danced in lines facing each other, man to woman. The movements or style of dancing was similar to that done at the *Uzamba* dance.

The Mkocho or Chondo dance was also performed by adult males and females only. Each dancer wore a clean fresh bark-cloth that was well-decorated and anointed prior

[48] Note that fish was among the favourite relishes among the Tumbuka families but it was not popular relish among the true Ngoni families.

to the dance. They danced to the sounds of a specific drum performed by specialists. The arrangement of the dancers was similar to the Mbeleka dance. The interesting thing about these marriage dances was that, while the people were dancing, the father of the newly married girl went round the dancers at regular intervals warning them not to do evil things (sexual activity) while dancing. He did not want immoral activity at the wedding of his daughter. When the Ngoni colonised the Tumbuka, they replaced these dances with their own daytime kraal dances. However, *Uzamba* remained undisturbed by the Ngoni and is still practised to this day. The Lakeshore Tonga did practise Mkocho and Mbeleka dances up to the post-Second European war era.

**THE MTUPA CLAIM**

As explained above, after marriage was sanctioned and all marriage rituals completed, the man began living with his wife in the wife's village. That was the custom of the matrilineal Tumbuka. The children born belonged to the wife's family. Unfortunately, if a child died nasty things happened to the man. First, the wife was told to sit in the house with the dead body of her child held in her hands on her lap. The body was not allowed to touch the ground. If it did, that was an additional offence for the man. The wife sat like that until her husband's family (or himself) paid her family the *Mtupa claim*. The Mtupa Claim was *compensation* to the wife's family for the death of the child or any member of his nucleus family. Only after this was paid did the burial arrangements begin. The woman's family prepared the body for burial. Second, there was another payment by the husband or his clan before the body was taken out of the funeral house for burial. At the graveyard, just before the body was put in the grave, the husband or his clan members made additional payment to the family of the wife.

If the wife died, the situation was even worse for the husband's clan. At times, the deceased wife's family even attacked the husband's family, a situation that initiated small but vicious interclan war. The husband was told to sit in the house with the body of his wife on his lap until his clan settled the *Mtupa claim*. After settling the *Mtupa claim* burial arrangements were initiated. Such payments were made twice, before the body left the house and just before the body was lowered in the grave for burial. If the husband died while living together with his wife in *his own* village, his wife's family was not charged *Mtupa claim*. However, if he died while living together with his wife in *her parents'* village, his wife's family paid *Mtupa claim* to the family of her deceased husband. The *Mtupa claim* for death of a woman was always more than the *Mtupa claim* for death of a child or a man. This is because a woman, and not a man, gives birth to children. For this reason she was more important and valuable to her family than the husband.

The *Mtupa* litigation was abolished in the Tumbuka society by the British administration in 1908. From that year, the *full marriage payments* to the girl's family became the norm in the Tumbuka society. Such full payments *transferred rights* over the *marriage* and *children from the girl's family to the husband's family*. The marriages from that year made the husband remain in his parents' village with his wife who he

brought from her parents' village. This rare positive interference by the British administration was one of the strongest factors that *drove* the Tumbuka into the Ngoni *lobola* (*transfer*) custom, of *transferring cattle from the boy's family to the girl's family.* The cattle were at that time in the Tumbuka society considered to be *more valuable items to be used and transferred as marriage payments from the family of boy marrying the girl to the family of the girl being married.*

The banning of Mtupa Claim was a fundamental cultural change in the Tumbuka society. From 1908 todate the husband's family in the Tumbuka society has continued assuming both control and possession of the wife and the children. To the Tumbuka, *lobola* or *ukulobola* was an overthrow by male sex in the society of the primitive or ancient female dominance by paying redemptive [redemptory] equilibrium payment in *cattle*. The change from the use of *other valuable items* in marriage payments in the pre-Ngoni era to the use of *cattle* during the Ngoni domination was definitely as a result of the Tumbuka imitating the Ngoni culture of using cattle in their marriage custom. In the new system, the only thing that the girl's (wife) parents assumed was the redemptive payment of *lobola*. The new system of equilibrium-settlement, created *essential* equality between the two groups: wife's and husband's families. This issue is also discussed separately in detail below under Marriage and Redemptive Payments.[49]

## MARRIAGES DURING THE BALOWOKA ERA

The Balowoka did not encourage the system of arranged marriages they found in practice among the Tumbuka in the M'nyanjagha kingdom. The Balowoka encouraged and practised marriage by personal choice. Initially few Tumbuka clans in Nkhamanga region of the M'nyanjagha kingdom imitated the way the Balowoka organised their marriages. By the mid 19th century many Tumbuka clans in Nkhamanga followed the way the Balowoka conducted their marriages. The manner in which the Balowoka arranged their marriages was in many ways very *similar* to the Tumbuka *marriages* especially the marriage *by personal choice*. The major difference was on where the husband lived after the marriage was sealed. As matrilineal, the Tumbuka followed the *matrilocal* system whereby from the wedding day the husband moved from his village to lived with his wife in the village of the wife's family. The Balowoka did not do this. Being a patrilineal society, they observed a *patrilocal* system, where the husband *briefly* lived with his wife in the village of the wife's family. After a few years, the husband together with his wife and children left his parents-in-law's village permanently to live in his family's village. Since the Balowoka had come to stay in the Nkhamanga region, and had to marry the native Tumbuka women a form of a 'compromise marriage arrangement' was mutually reached. As a result of this blending of the two different marriage customs, new practices emerged and new marriage terminologies came into use. The changes were more pronounced in Nkhamanga region than in the areas far away from Nkhamanga. As a result of this, people in areas that were

[49] For more details on the issues discussed here, read chapters 5 to 7 in Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, pp. 56-93.

not affected by the Balowoka influence, practised ancient Tumbuka marriage arrangements and procedures. That is to say, the further away the place was from central Nkhamanga the less affected it was by the Balowoka marriage customs and vice-versa. Those affected by the Balowoka practised a combination of the Tumbuka and Balowoka marriage customs especially in Nkhamanga area. The 'combined or blended' system of marriage arrangement was again negatively affected later in the 19th century by the influences of the Senga and Ngoni discussed below. This is how bad the Tumbuka marriage system has been affected since the arrival of the new-comers in the M'nyanjagha kingdom.

After the girl accepted his marriage proposal, the boy informed his male family elders, who quickly began arranging the marriage procedures. First, the boy's family organised the *Chijula mulomo* after which they had to pay the *first* instalment of *Chimalo* (also called *Chuma cha pa mwana*, that is, goods or assets on account of a child). There was no fixed amount for the *first* instalment of the *Chimalo*. Usually, the first instalment comprised three traditionally manufactured hoes plus a bundle of native cotton. These were always *carried* in a bag (*thumba*) made from the goatskin by the *thenga* of the boy's family to the family of the girl. This is probably why, up to date, *Chimalo*, whether in the form of money or cattle is sometimes called *thumba* by the Tumbuka.

The girl's family received the initial Chimalo instalment. The hoes were each examined in silence. The hoes were put aside but the cotton was put back in the bag and handed back to the Thenga. The acceptance of the hoes by the girl's family meant that the marriage was sanctioned. However, putting cotton back in the bag and handing it to the Thenga meant that the initial instalment received by the girl's family was not adequate, more was required. Indeed, after some time, the boy's family organised another hoe and sent it to the girl's family the usual way. Each time the cotton and the bag were returned to the boy's family meant that the girl's side wanted more payments. But the time when *cotton* and the *bag* were not sent back to the boy's family, it meant that the girl's family was happy and all the *Chimalo* payments were henceforth completed, and marriage proceedings could begin thereafter.

Elderly women from the girl's village came to the boy's village to announce the date of the marriage ceremony to be held in the girl's village. Before this date, the boy with his colleague's assistance had already began working for the parents-in-law in their village. The first time he went to work he carried beads as presents to the girl's family. The presents were called *Mboni*. The *Thenga* presented them to the girl's family. After work, the girl's family presented him with a chicken or a goat. During this period the boy did not build a house in the girl's village. After sometime he went back to his village.

However, after a few months, the boy went back to the girl's village. This was a reconnaissance trip trying to scrutinise his girl's community. On arrival in the evening, members of the girl's family met him at the outskirt of the village. As he entered the village, he used the slow processional steps. Each time he moved forward, he was given some presents until he reached the house where he was led and told to spend a night. Before he entered into the house he was given some more presents in the doorway. That

day he did not see his wife and the following day he left for his village without meeting his wife.
Two months after his visit to the girl's village, his family sent some goats to the girl's family. If the goats were accepted, then the boy was told to get ready to go and collect his wife from her village. That was also the time when the women from the girl's village came to the boy's village announcing the day of the grand wedding.

Some days before the wedding celebrations, the *Bazamba* in the girl's village began instructing the girl in various aspects of life. If she was a rude girl in the community, that was the time the women punished her for her behaviour. They did that by pinching, pricking and scratching her with nails, normally inside of the thighs (*mu nthapatapa*), *kumu chikibula na njobe, chikibu!* The first *Uzamba* ceremony was done few weeks before the girl went into marriage. The *second Uzamba* ceremony was specifically done for the purpose of the *actual* 'entering' into marriage.

One morning, few days before the marriage celebrations, the girl was taken out of the Uzamba house to be bathed, shaved and anointed, ready for the marriage. After getting her ready, the Bazamba carried the girl to a nearby bush for a physical (and 'medical') examination. There, she was thoroughly checked to ascertain her virginity just before marriage. That was a very tense moment for her family, her clan and the whole village community. If there was singing from the bush by the *Bazamba,* it meant that indeed the girl was a *virgin* and ready for marriage without fear. She had passed the virginity test. On hearing the Bazamba singing, the people in the village who were waiting anxiously responded by saying that: *chuma talya makola, mwe!* Translated thus: *We have eaten the goods or assets all correct!* What they meant was that now that the girl has passed the virginity test, the girl's clan can share the *Chimalo cha pa mwana* payments from the boy's family without any worries of their daughter being rejected on account of not being a virgin. She passed an important test in the marriage procedures. If the women proved that she was not a virgin, there was no singing from the bush. That raised a case against the girl's clan. For the wedding to take place, and everything else to continue as planned, the girl's family quickly paid the fine to the boy's family. If they ound out that the one who deflowered her was the boy marrying her, then he was severely rebuked and his family paid the girl's family heavily for the offence. If she mentioned another man, then the named man also paid heavily to the girl's family, which also ultimately paid the boy's family.

If all went well, the women of the girl's village went to the boy's village to announce the date of the marriage celebrations. The boy was told by the elders to prepare two things before going to the girl's village. These were, a mat for his parents-in-law and bark-cloth for his wife. The bark-cloth was handed over to the *Bazamba* from the girl's village that welcomed the group from the boy's village as they entered the village. The *Bazamba* clothed the wife prior to coming out of the house where she had been receiving intensive training and advice on aspects of marriage life from the village Bazamba. The final advice-giving ceremony was conducted publicly outside the house where the couple would be living thereafter. All well wishers came and publicly gave the couple advice on how to

live together and how to live in the community. It was also at this ceremony that the couple was adminitered with medicine for faithfulness called *mulumila*. The medicine was usually an argument against breaking up the marriage in future. The affected one would say, 'did you not take *mulumila*, in the presence of every body, why then do you want to leave me now'?

After this ceremony, all went to dance and participate in the celebrations throughout the day and night.

For few years the man lived together with his wife in the village of his wife's family. That was called *ukweni*. Practically the term *mukweni* meant son-in-law as opposed to *mukamwana*, daughter-in-law. The son-in-law was generally known as the *mukweni* of the parents-in-law, of the wife's family, and also generally as the *mukweni* of the people in the village. If the couple lived in the boy's village the same would be true of the *mukamwana*.

After some years in the wife's village, the man decided to go back to his village together with his wife and children carrying all his belongings. That movement was a diplomatic '*Kusompola*' ('snatching' away the wife with 'authority' from her parents). Thereafter, the couple lived in the husband's village forever. That was a *change* from the *original* Tumbuka matrilocal system of marriage to a Balowoka patrilocal system of marriage. It remained this way forever.[50] From 1908 when Mtupa Claim was banned the Tumbuka also joined the Balowoka by practising patrilocal marriages. The couple's children belonged to the husband of the *patrilineal* Balowoka community and not to the Tumbuka wife's uncle as it were prior to the arrival of the Balowoka. By imitating the Balowoka in their marriage practices it did not mean, in anyway, that the Tumbuka had abandoned their matrilineality position. They still went on as a matrilineal society with the exception of some people, mainly those living within the Balowoka regions or living closer to them that adopted the Balowoka marriage sytems. Later, the *new* system became the *norm* in the Tumbuka society especially from 1908. However, *it* still *did not mean* that by *origin* and culture the Tumbuka were patrilineal. They were and still are matrilineal although some had changed for *political convenience* to the patrilineal system. It is very important to *note* here that the *change* only observed patrilineal inheritance of property and patrilocal marriages but the hereditary political power continued to be inherited matrilineally. The Tumbuka people must clearly understand this point to avoid any future confusion as to whether they are matrilineal or patrilineal. The truth is that the true Tumbuka have always known that they are a matrilineal people.

Few weeks after the '*Kusompola*', the wife went back to her family. In her village, she prepared small bracelets of grass beads or modern beads. These were her farewell presents to her Bazamba, peers, mother and father's sister. She personally put each of these bracelets on the wrist of each of the people she bade farewell to. The farewell ritual was called *Kuwinga* [*Kubinga*] ('weaning'). After the farewell ritual, the woman returned to her husband's village.

[50] This was the situation when the Ngoni entered the Tumbukaland. Thereafter, it was the Ngoni who destroyed the last vestiges of the matrilineal marriage practices. They enforced the existing Balowoka patrilineal marriage practices.

## MARRIAGES DURING THE NGONI ERA

The Ngoni were the last group of Africans to colonise the Tumbuka before the British came to 'colonise' Central Africa at the end of the 19th century. The Ngoni arrived in the middle of the 19th century. They brought and introduced their own cultural practices relating to marriage. In the process they modified the existing Tumbuka-Balowoka [Tumbuwoka] marriage practices. In the end, marriage practices in the Ngoni era were a combination of all the *three* in a modified way. Thus, today, marriage practices are a combination of a large proportion from the Ngoni, a small proportion from the Balowoka and another small proportion from the Tumbuka. We can therefore accurately talk of the *Tungoka* marriage customs (Tumbuka, Ngoni and Balowoka combined) currently in practice in the Tumbukaland. In the foregoing paragraphs we have discussed the marriage ceremonies during the era of the Balowoka. What changes did the Ngoni people bring in in the marriage customs?

The Ngoni practised Marriage by Personal Choice. A man who reached the marrying age looked for a girl of marriageable age. The Ngoni were *very strict* on marrying or getting married at the right age. Once the man and the woman agreed to marry they told their respective relatives about their intention to marry. That was to let their respective relatives start marriage procedures leading to their legal union in marriage.

The man informed a member of the family from the patrilineal *Gogo* house, the house of the patrilineal grandparents. In many cases it was the patrilineal grandfather. It was him who informed the man's father about his son's plans to marry. The man marrying is by tradition not allowed to tell his father directly about his intentions to marry.

The father of the man intending to marry chose one elder from the patrilineal *Gogo* house, such as, a patrilineal grandfather or elder cousin, to be the go-between, *Nkhoswe* (what the Tumbuka called *Thenga*), for the family. He was responsibility for the efficient accomplishment of the marriage arrangements and procedures. He represented the man's father in marriage discussions with the girl's family. In all, he was a very important man who commanded respect and had great experience in marriage issues. He also knew the traditions of the Ngoni thoroughly.

The go-between went to the girl's family to inform them about the man's marriage intentions. The meeting took place in a house. The first meeting was normally very brief. Before he said anything to the parents of the girl, he put some money in a small plate or container covers with another small plate or container of equal size. He then gave it to the representative of girl's family, his counterpart. The payment for starting the talks was, and still is, extremely important. It was a mouth opener, *C'hivula mulomo*, and without it, talks could not start. The man's *Nkhoswe* waited until the plates were collected, symbolising that permission is granted for him to start talking with them on the *marriage issue*.

After the brief talks, the gilr's family representaive told the man's Nkhoswe to come on a specific date for an answer from the girl's family. He left the house and went back, to report to the man's family. He also waited up to the set date to go back to the girl's village to resume the talks. On the appointed day, the go-betweens from both families met again at the village of the girl's parents. That time the girl's parents called the girl and asked her in the presence of the Nkhoswe from the man's family. The purpose of calling her was to ascertain if she indeed knew the man and they agreed to marry. The girl's own words or response had to be heard and confirmed by the man's Nkhoswe in the presence of the other Nkhoswe. If her answer was negative, then the discussions there and then discontinued. But if the answer was positive, the discussions continued. The go-between went back to report the good news to the man's family.

Next stage was for the man to send an engagement token, *Chikhole*, to the girl through his go-between. Chikhole assured the girl that the man was serious and meant business. After that, the girl's family asked for *Kacheka* from the man. This was a second small token after Chikhole from the man. However, *Kacheka* was specifically for the girl's mother in appreciation for having given birth to her and raised her well. After Kacheka payment, the girl's family demanded for the main marriage payment from the man's family. It was called *Chimalo*.

The next thing to do was for the man's family to send an animal (cattle) to the girl's family. The beast was called *Mfuko*, the '*snuff box*' beast. It was a gift from the man's father to the girl, his future daughter-in-law. When taking the beast to the girl's family, the man's go-between went with many companions but none of them was an immediate family relative of the groom. The beast was killed at the girl's village and was used for a *betrothal* feast in the same village. That was like a modern engagement party. At the end of the betrothal ceremony, the girl's parents and some elderly people of the village said, '*we have snuffed*'.

After the betrothal ceremony came the *Vipheko* ceremony. This was the time when the girl's family prepared beer and different types of food. These were taken to the man's family amidst singing and ululating. When the man's family returned the empty food container to the girl's family, they put some gifts in each container in appreciation of the different types of food they enjoyed. That was very similar to what the Bemba people of northern Zambia (the traditional cousins of all people in eastern Zambia and northern Malawi) practise and they call such a ceremony, *Amatebeto*.

The main marriage payment consisted of *mainly* cattle, and the number of cattle to go to the girl's family depended on among other things, the status of the girl's family. However, ordinarily, the *Lobola* (transfer of cattle from the man's family to the girl's family) (what the Tumbuka called *Malobolo*) payments consisted of cattle, numbers ranging from three to any number. Normally, Royal clans paid *lobola* ranging from fifteen cattle upwards. Once lobola was paid, the next stage was for the man's family

to ask for the *bride* to join the *groom* in the man's village. That was accepted and preparations for the big wedding commenced. A lavish wedding ceremony, *M'thimba* was organised by both families. It was a disgress to both families, but much more to the girl's family if the girl became pregnant before the wedding day. It was also a serious offence punishable by a heavy fine. The man responsible, whether the 'husband' or not was charged a fee known as *Chidumo*. This had to be paid before further marriage arrangements could proceed.

*M'thimba* was announced by the man's parents after the main marriage payment was paid. The *Gogo* house of the man's family sent a message to the *Gogo* house of the girl's family informing them of the date for the wedding. They were invited to go to the man's village. Once the date was known, both families started preparing for the big occasion.

Many weeks before the wedding day, the bride was thoroughly trained in what was expected of her in marriage life. They made sure that they sent a well instructed-wife who will not embarrass them by failing to live up to the expected standards set by the Ngoni society. Experienced elderly women were her trainers. The training session is known as *Ukuconga*. At this time the bride is referred to as *Umlobokazi*, the bride.

And on a well selected day, the bride is taken to indhlunkulu, in the village, where the leading women in marriage affairs, in many cases, her father's mother and her father's sisters, give her final instructions on how to behave in her new home. During such instuctions the girl is supposed to 'weep'. Her mother is also supposed to 'weep' as sign of moral support for her daughter.

On the morning of the day they left for the wedding, the *Umlobokazi* was dressed in freshly prepared skins. Her hair was arranged in the *isihlutu* (chignon) style, to which the gall bladder of a goat was pinned and the gall bladder of a cow was tied to her elbow. Together with the bride's agemates, very close elderly female relatives, such as aunts, and some men, they left for the groom's village. A lot of beer was carried to the man's village for this occasion. The young men of the bride's party drove a bull specifically for this occasion. It was called *M'cando* (*M'tyando*), and it was a present from the girl's family to the man's family. That was the first time the bride's family and friends were offically going to see and meet the husband's family.

As a custom, the bride's party waited by the gate of the *Kraal* ululating and singing M'thimba songs and in praise of the bride's clan. That was their announcement to the groom's family that they had arrived. The young men driving the bull entered the Kraal first then followed by the whole group. Shortly thereafter, they began dancing in the Kraal. After some time, the elderly women of the village came and greeted them. They were followed by men who came and greeted the visitors, and later gathered by the *indhlunkulu, central royal house of the senior advisor.*

Meanwhile, the bride remained at the road on the outskirt of the village with the chief women waiting to be collected by the elderly women from the man's family. The bride walked few steps and stopped. She performed the slow processional steps. She only moved on after she got gifts from the elderly women from the man's family. That went on until the bride and her chief women entered the Kraal. Then the bridal party began to sing with their heads bowed. Their chief M'thimba woman (similar to a modern wedding matron) came forward, bending low on her knees, and presented to the *induna* (councillor) of the *indhlunkulu* of the husband's village a basket containing snuff-boxes and beads. She also made a short speech saying, 'here is our child who is now leaving her home... she has no father now...we expect you to cherish her now as her father would'. The process of entering into the groom's village and presenting the basket containing snuff-boxes was called *Ukugandisa*. The action of *coming* and *offering* beer and other presents to the husband's village from the girl's parents is known as *Mungenisa khaya* (officially letting her enter the groom's village). The ceremony was done to allow the bride gain entry into her *new* village, her husband's village, and in the process be officially welcomed by her husband's relatives. The *actual* entry into the village is called *Kungena khaya*.

In response to the woman's short speech, the *induna* assured them that, 'now that she is here we will cherish her, but she must respect the owner of this house and be under him in all things'. After this, the men of the village took one snuff simultaneously. The bridal party and the villagers all remained seated and began to sing *Umbedlo* songs, songs sang while seated. In the evening the bridal party was offered accommodation and slept in the village.

The following morning the bridal party started dancing in the Kraal while the husband's family killed a beast for the M'thimba feast. The women of the village joined the visitors in the Kraal, dancing with them. The leader of the women of the village who joined the visitors took the husband's spear, which she brought in when entering the Kraal, and used it to pat the bride gently on the shoulder. That was a sign that the bride was now one of the women of the village. It was a public warm welcome for the bride. The correct response from the bridal party was to turn their backs and weep to show their grief, because she had left them, by joining the groom's family. Dancing continued until in the night when the bride's party, as per tradition, took the bride to the husband's house and left her there. That was the first time the couple slept together.

The following morning, before the bridal party returned home, the bride went to the door of the house of her husband and called out the praise names of *her* father. She then sang the praisesongs, *Ummekezo*, while the husband stood in the doorway behind her. He then went into the Kraal and sat down facing the bridal party that was also singing.

The bride came into the Kraal with a gourd of water. That time, there was total silence, while she poured water for him to wash his hands, mouth and eyes. That was the first public act of service for the husband after consummation of the marriage and it marked the end of the main part of the M'thimba ceremony after which the bridal party went back

to its home leaving the bride behind. The bridal party carried all the clothes that the bride was using up to this time, so that the husband can prepare or buy her new ones.

After this, there were three more ceremonies perfomed for the new wife by the women of the village. The first one took place about two days after the departure of the bridal party. It was an occasion for her husband's relatives to give the wife specific instuctions and advice. She sat on a mat by the *indhlunkulu* while the chief woman of the house dressed her the *isihlutu*, anointed her with oil and dressed her in fresh skins and new beads taken from the store of the house to which she now belonged. They then instructed her on how to behave to the old and the young. That was the moment when presents were given to her by each one of the women a piece of advice or instructions.

The second ceremony took place about forty days after the first one. It was called *Ukufumisa umlobokazi*, bringing the wife out. All the time since she came from her village, she has been 'sitting' by her house under surveillance. She was being watched by other elderly women of the house, she ate a little, and her food was prepared by her mothet-in-law. She spoke to those who gave her gifts. The second ceremony gives her the right to go anywhere and talk with anyone. She could help her mother-in-law by fetching firewood and lighting the fire for her. She was also given some kitchen utensils. For example, a pot of water and an axe for cutting firewood were given to her. Her mother-in-law gave her the *Indhlekuza* bead, a sign that she may *speak and eat in the presence* of her parents-in-law.

The bride went through a number of tests during this period. For instance, she had to fetch a huge bundle of split wood and lay it down in front of her mother-in-law's house without dropping any. Since the bundle was on her head, it meant kneeling down and bending forward slowly until she gently eased the bundle of wood on the ground. Other tests included shelling large quantities of maize (or any edible cereal), soaking them and pounding them into stamped maize (or nat edible cereal) known as *Izinkobe*. These tests were collectively called *Ukulinga umlobokazi*, watching the new wife. That life was far more exacting than anyting she had been made to do in her own village.

The final ceremony was the *Ukupekisa umlobokazi*, integration of the bride. The ceremony recognised the new wife's *house* as the starting point of a *new* house. It was a ceremony of making fire in her new house to cook food for her husband. This is how it was done: about three months after marriage, a woman from her father-in-law's partenal *Gogo* house suddenly appeared in the doorway of the new wife's house, carrying three hearth-stones. She fetched fire, kindled it and began cooking maize or edible cereal. The young wife, very astonished was supposed to weep because she had now been turned away from her mother-in-law's cooking place. The cooked maize (or other cereal) on the first fire in the new house was divided into portions and taken to each section of the village 'attached' to the *house*.

The young wife sat near the woman who had prepared the maize (or other cereal) being distributed, showing grief. But in the end she became so excited that few days later she made a trip back to her own village to tell her parents the good news. The response of her

own people was to prepare food for a feast in the new village of the girl. They brought the food to her new village to express to her father-in-law's family their sincere happiness and appreciation for the token of confidence they had in the girl and her ability to cook for her husband. That marked the end of the marriage procedures among the Ngoni, a virilocal society, just like the Balowoka.

The second *Malobolo* come some years later. It was the payment for the children born in the family so that they could traditionally and legally belong to the man. It was paid in cattle, usually one cow per child and one bull for all the children. If the wife could not produce children, there was no second *Malobolo*. To this effect the girl's parents asked the man if he still loved the girl and wanted married to continue. If he says YES, then they asked him if he wanted a second wife to bear children on behalf of his first barren wife. If he accepted, then a second wife from his wife's family was given to him. She is known as *hlazi* in Ngoni and *Mbiliya* in Tumbuka. When the second wife produced children, her family demanded the second *Malobolo* from her husband's family.

Marriage payments like *chamulomo, chikhole, kacheka, chidumo and* second *malobolo were* not refundable if they divorced. However, the first *malobolo* was refundable if they divorce due to the woman's fault. If the man was unable to pay the second *malobolo*, his wife's family took charge of the marriage arrangements and marriage payments of the couple's eldest daughter. That way, the couple's eldest daughter helped the father to pay the second *malobolo*. From that time all the children belonged to the husband. If the husband died before paying the second *malobolo*, the relatives took up the responsibility and paid. If they did not, then the tradition allowed the girl's relatives to claim back the children. But if the wife died before the husband finished paying the second *malobolo*, then he lost the children and on top of that he had to pay *mlumo* (*chamulomo*) in form of a bull.

## MARRIAGE AND REDEMPTIVE PAYMENTS

There is always confusion surrounding the customary marriage payments in the African society. Modern scholars especially those specialising in gender studies have commented negatively on the marriage payments in the African societies. This point was made clear in the book *Traditional Marriages in Zambia* and it is being emphasized here again.[51] In the Tumbuka society, the marriage payment 'was in no sense (and still is not) the 'purchase' of a girl. It was not a wife who was bought but the husband's freedom, and the freedom of his family from liability for Mtupa payments. The freedom included full rights over the children of the marriage. It was in fact, a redemption payment (*Kuombola*) and at the same time it preserved an equilibrium, between the two independent groups. Those who parted with a girl and all types of increase (children) through her, received in exchange, that which put it in their power to acquire from another group, and without loss to themselves a wife for one of their sons and all rights of increase (children) through her. . . . It was a

[51]Read Yizenge A. Chondoka, *Traditional Marriages in Zambia. A Study in Cultural history* (Ndola: The Mission Press, 1988), Introduction.

token, that one community gave up a valuable member (the girl) in witness whereof the receiving community (the boy's) transferred such a quantity of goods as was considered sufficient to restore the equilibrium'. [52]

From the foregoing paragraph it is thus, appropriate to call the marriage payments as Redemptive or Equilibrium Payment, *and not bride-price or dowry*. Therefore, *Kuombola* or redemptive payment was as already stated above, an overthrow mechanism by male sex of female dominance by the *Redemptive Equilibrium Paymen.*

[52]Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, pp.70-71.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

# OTHER TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

## MWAVI ORDEAL

In any society people offend each other in many ways. The authorities have put in place mechanisms of punishing the offenders. The type of punishment varies according to the gravity of the offence. Among the Tumbuka the most common way of trying the offenders was by using the *Mwavi Ordeal*. *Mwavi* is a term for a ritual *trial* administered on suspected offenders in order to prove them innocent or guilty of the offence they are accused to have committed. Originally *Mwavi* was *mainly* administered to people suspected of practicing witchcraft or people who were accused of being adulterous in the community. There were two types of *Mwavi*, namely *Mwavi wa khuni* and *Mwavi wa maji*. The local chief or headman asked experts in the preparation of *Mwavi* to prepare it whenever the need arose in the community.

*Mwavi wa khuni* (*Mwavi* from the *tree*) was made from a poisonous bark of a specific tree. The bark was removed from the tree, dried and pounded to powder. The powder was mixed with water and the mixture was put on *Chande*, a small traditional plate made from dried gourd. The mixture was administered to the people in the dispute. The mixture was *not* boiled. The *Mwavi wa khuni* could also be administered by proxy. That is, instead of administering it to the people in the dispute, it could be administered to a dove, a chicken or a dog chosen by the people in the dispute. As stated above, the chief or headman appointed the person to administer *Mwavi*. The appointment had to be *agreed by both people* in the dispute. The administrator was chosen for each *Mwavi* session and at the time of the session, the chosen adminstrator was called *Kazembe*. *Mwavi* was administered either at the chief's house or headman's house. It was also common to have *Mwavi* sessions at the village *Mphala (courtyard or forum of justice)*, a place in the village where men were usually found doing men's tasks and discussing men's and village matters, including disputes. Children were the only ones not allowed at the *Mwavi* sessions.

There were two methods of administering *Mwavi wa khuni*. In the direct method, the accused would be asked to drink the concoction from the *Chande*. If he/she was innocent he/she would survive the ordeal by vomiting it. But if she/he was the guilty one, she/he would die after drinking the *Mwavi*. In the proxy method, the *Kazembe* used two small white (*holy*!) chickens (or dogs). Each chicken came from the *side* in the dispute. The chickens were given *Mwavi* to drink. The chicken from the guilty person died after drinking *Mwavi* served on the *Chande*. The chicken from the innocent person survived.

*Mwavi wa maji* or water test, was another type of *Mwavi*. A vessel of water was put on fire. At the centre of the vessel was placed a pebble. The water in the vessel boiled for short time. One of the people in dispute was asked to deep his/her hand and

forearm in the boiling water in the vessel and collect the pebble. He/she removed the pebble from the bottom of the vessel and held it for a moment for all present to see before he/she replaced it at the bottom of the vessel. The other person in dispute did the same. If the hand, wrist or arm showed blisters, then that person was guilty of the offence. If blisters did not show, then the person was not guilty. No method was considered better than the other.

*Mwavi* was always carried out on both the accused and the accuser. If the accused was found guilty of the serious offence of being a *witch/wizard*, she/he died after drinking *Mwavi*. But if for some reasons, the accused did not die immediately after taking *Mwavi*, the people in the community secretly killed her/him. Whether the one found guilty died immediately after drinking *Mwavi* or died few hours later (or first survived the ordeal but was killed later as was normally the case of a witch or wizard), the innocent person was quickly compensated by the guilty one or his/her family. For the innocent man, a woman was given to him as compensation for being wrongly accused. For the innocent woman, three goats or six hoes (or a piece of land) were given to her as compensation for being wrongly accused. Presents were also given to those who administered the *Mwavi*. Before the introduction of the *Mwavi* in the Tumbuka society, a sharp bough was hammered through the person proved guilty of being a witch, wizard or any criminal offence in society.

## MDULO

*Kujungula* is directly connected with *Mdulo* in the Tumbuka society. *Kujungula* is defined as socially enjoined behaviour. Failure to conform to the socially enjoined behaviour or failure to *Kujungula*, always leads to *Mdulo*. Traditionally, *Mdulo* is a concept that describes a cough similar to severe tuberculosis (TB) that produces blood. Traditionally, there are many causes of *Mdulo*, each one based on different circumstances. For instance, when a husband is a womanizer and flirts with many women while his wife is pregnant, the wife will suffer from *Mdulo wa Mapinga,* that is, the *Mdulo* that will breach the child in the womb. She is likely to die in labour while giving birth. Here, *Mapinga* (the breach position of the child in her mother's womb) suggests that the child is not happy with the father's activities. The child may be born alive but the mother may die while giving birth. For her to survive the *Mdulo wa Mapinga* and give birth normally she is given medicine before she gives birth. The medicine will counter the power of *Mdulo wa Mapinga*.

The same happens if the pregnant woman, usually unmarried, met several men before becoming pregnant. She will suffer from *Mdulo wa Mapinga* and will die in labour of her own child. *Mapinga* suggests that the child in her mother's womb is not happy with the activities of the mother. For her not to die in labour, she must first of all mention the names of all the men she slept with to the traditional midwives (*Muzamba*) just before childbirth. Once this is done, she is given medicine to have a smooth childbirth. If she slept with many men and she could not remember all their names, then the elderly women subjected her to a special ritual. She was asked to bring a

grain-sieving shallow hand basket (*Luselo)* with either millet or sorghum in it. She was then asked to orderly spread or scatter the grain within the Luselo with her hand (fingers) and while doing this she was asked to say the following: 'I have slept with as many men as the number of the seeds in this Luselo.' She would, thereafter, give birth normally. The ritual she performed prevented her from dying of Mdulo wa Mapinga. The belief was that if she did not perform the ritual she would die of Mdulo wa Mapinga.

If a woman delivers a baby without problems but thereafter the husband sleeps with other women, the child will suffer from a cough called *Mdulo wa moto*. This is because the cough hurts like fire (*moto*) in the chest. Soon thereafter, the child dies from *Mdulo wa moto*. If medicine is not found and administered quickly, all other children in the family will catch the *Mdulo wa moto* and may die. They will be coughing terribly and will have swollen limbs. If a woman has a child and is married to a polygamist, she is usually advised to take medicine before she begins sleeping with him. This is done for the safety of the child who otherwise would catch the *Mdulo wa moto*.

Traditionally, after childbirth, the woman is forbidden to put salt in any relish (*dende*). She is considered not fit to do that, because she is culturally unclean. If she has children at home, they will be the ones she will be asking to put an already measured amount of salt in the relish at an appropriate time. Normally, after childbirth, the woman is also not allowed to prepare any meals. This is because in addition to the reasons mentioned earlier on, she is also considered tired and weak for such tasks at home. She is supposed to be doing simpler tasks of just looking after the newly born child, *Bonda*.

If she begins putting salt in the relish before the child is a month old, those eating the relish will suffer from *Mdulo*. Some parts of their bodies will swell. However, during pregnancy the woman is allowed to prepare any food and put salt in any relish. She will not cause or suffer *Mdulo* of any kind. There is an exception to this 'salt' taboo. When the affected woman puts tomato, water, groundnut powder or onion in the relish, the *Mdulo* does not act upon anyone who eats such food. This is because *these items* are not '*salt*'. *Mdulo* only affects salt.

The other time when a woman can cause *Mdulo* is when she is undergoing menstrual periods. During this time, she is considered culturally unclean, and therefore not allowed to cook, unless she has nobody to help her, which is very rare in a traditional society. She is also not permitted to put salt in the relish. If she contravenes these cultural regulations she will cause people eating the food suffer from *Mdulo*. There is also *Mdulo* connected with the funerals. The relatives of the deceased were given medicine before his/her body was buried otherwise the whole family could suffer from *Mdulo* if this was not done. The medicine protected the relatives from catching *Mdulo* after the funeral was over.

## UZAMBA CEREMONY

In reality, *Uzamba* ceremony was and still is an initiation ceremony for a girl who has become of age. It is an instructional dance performed by elderly women of the community. The ceremony is performed indoor, in an *Uzamba* House, and mainly performed *before* the girl under instruction. It is also one of the 'marriage' dances in the Tumbuka society. The instructions focus on marriage, adult life and how to live in the society. The instructions convey certain lessons about life in the society and such data are always transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. The *Uzamba* dance emphasizes on swaying of the waist which is characteristic of specific instructions associated with marriage life. The *Uzamba* dance can also be performed even if there is no girl to instruct. The elderly women in the community perform the dance as an entertainment for the *adult* females only in the community. That is because *Uzamba* is a dance exclusively for women.

At the age of eleven, a girl moved out of her mother's house to join other older girls in the *Mphala ya basungwana*, a house specifically for girls above ten years.[53] Normally, a girl came of age at between eleven and fourteen years old. The first sign that she became of age was the first flow of blood from her private parts. This was her first menstrual period in her life and for this reason she got surprised and frightened about what was happening to her body and rushed into the bush, *never* to her parents. That was a method of announcing her first menstrual flow. She was quickly fetched by the elderly women, Bazamba and brought back into the village.

Once her first monthly period was confirmed by the elderly women, the girl was quickly isolated from others and began lessons about hygiene during the subsequent menstrual periods. She was also told about the taboos associated with the menstrual periods in the society. The *women cultural experts* who taught the girl about the initiation ceremony and all that went with it were called *Bazamba*. While in seclusion, the girl was fed on saltless food mixed with appropriate medicine. It was taboo to take salt at this time. If she did she would suffer from some form of *Mdulo*.

During training at the initiation ceremony in the *Uzamba House*, the girl was smeared with coloured clay all over her body, decorated with beads of various colours and remained naked with only a small cloth covering her front below the waist and another small cloth covering her behind below the waist. Only women were allowed to enter the *Uzamba* House where the ceremony was taking place, either to attend or participate in the ceremony. The *Bazamba* made a big beautiful circle, *Chikuse*, from soils of different bright colours. This was the circle the girl who became of age (or the initiate), *Mwali*, was told to be jumping across it, in her sit-up position, from time to time, as

[53]When the Ngoni occupied the Tumbuka territory, they brought their own name for this institution. Hence, the Tumbuka term, *Mphala ya Basungwana* was eventually replaced by the Ngoni name *Nthanganeni*, and is the only one known and in use today. *Mphala ya Banyamata* was for the boys. For the Ngoni *Laweni* is the equivalent of Nthanganeni for the boys. But as stated ealier on such institutions were not there in the Pre-Ngoni and Pre-Baloboka eras.

required by the *Bazamba* in preparation for the main *Uzamba* ceremony, a week later. During the one week training period, the girl was called *Mwali wa Lisumba* (the girl who has become of age and as innocent as an egg). Her parents started preparing beer to be ready on the day of the ceremony which was also the day when she came out of seclusion. She would sit up and be asked to jump across the beautiful circle several times. She also did other tasks pertaining to the ceremony. All the tasks were undertaken during the time when specific *Uzamba songs* and *drums* were in progress. As stated earlier on the physical training focused on swaying movements of the waist (*kumu denyeska mu luwunda*). Training went on for a week after which she was taken out of the *Uzamba* House.

On the last day, the *Mwali* was removed out of the *Uzamba* House and taken straight to the river where she was bathed and shaved by the *Bazamba*. She was also anointed with oil and tied with local or European beads round the waist and the neck. On the trip to the river, the *Bazamba* carried a small pot of beer that they hid in the nearby bush just before the river. After preparing her for the main *Uzamba* ceremony, the girl was hoisted on one of the women's (*Bazamba*) shoulders back to the village. As they went to the village, the women sang a song that went like this:

*Solo yati cheke cheke cheke* . . . the honey-guide has called, *cheke cheke cheke*.
*Yaona uchi* . . . it has seen honey.

Immediately the song was heard, people rushed from the village to the river to fetch for the pot of beer hidden in the bush. The beer was drunk and the crowd followed the women into the village where the main *Uzamba* dance was to take place. The feastival had already began in the village. People were in a jovial mood, dancing, drinking and eating.

The girl was quickly taken to the Uzamba House where she displayed the dancing skills she was taught by the *Bazamba* to the amusement of the trainers, local and the invited elderly women from the neighbouring community. This went on for the whole day and night. It usually came to an end the following morning. That marked the end of the ceremony. After the ceremony, the girl was not allowed to speak to anyone. However, anyone wishing to speak to her, gave her *Mboni*, a present, normally, a string of beads, to start a conversation with her. *Ku meta* was a special event at which the *Mwali*'s hair on her head was removed. Thereafter, the *Mwali* was taken to the river and bathed by the *Bazamba*. From the river, she was told to sit on the mat outside a house where she received public advice from the well-wishers, men and women on how to behave as an adult in the community. This time, even unmarried women or other recently graduated *Mwalis* were allowed to give advice openly. The advice emphasized on her, to be:

*(a)* ready to be of use to the elders, especially the old.

*(b)* hospitable to strangers.

*(c)* kind to children and the cripples in the community.

The girl remained mute throughout the open-air 'advice-giving' session.

During the first month after the *Uzamba* ceremony, the girl ate from her parents' home only. This was because her mother was seen to be the appropriate person who would strictly observe certain taboos for her daughter successfully. For example, during that time, tradition did not allow her mother to have sexual intercourse with her husband. If the parents had sexual intercourse during that time, the girl would suffer from *Mdulo*. Sex was only allowed after the *Mwali*'s second menstrual period. The other reason for eating from her parents' home only was that the food given to her was mixed with some medicine for this occasion.

Two months after the first menstrual period, the girl had her hair cut again. This was now the mark of her *entry* into the world of *adulthood*. More advice and lessons on how to live as an adult in society were given to her. As an adult, she was particularly careful always to wear loin or underwear, *Mugonda*. Soon after that, she was married to the man who proposed marriage to her before she became a *Mwali*. If not, she joined her age-mates (*Mwalis*) in the village. These played together and also slept together in the *Mphala ya Basungwana* (equivalent of the Ngoni *Nthanganeni)*.

## THE INSTITUTION OF NTHANGANENI

*Nthanganeni or Mpala ya Basungwana* was not just a building but a very important institution in the traditional life of the Tumbuka *from the era of the Ngoni* that was the cornerstone of the traditional marriage. By definition, *nthanganeni* was a name for a house where only girls slept. Those who were young and not initiated (matured) slept in one *nthanganeni*, a 'lower' one, and those who were initiated (matured) also slept in another *nthanganeni*, the 'upper' one. In a big village therefore, there were many *nthanganenis*.

A *nthanganeni* was normally about 4 square metres in size, without room divisions inside. It had many reed mats and beddings but no furniture. The girls slept on the same mats but each one had her own blanket of *Nyanda* or animal hide. Most of the girls' discussions in the *nthanganeni* focussed on the boys especially those who were good dancers at such dances as *Vyanusi, Fumu za Pasi, Vimbuza* or *Vilombo* dancers.[2] Such boys were always the centre of attraction and admired by the adult girls in the village and those from the neighbouring villages. Later on in the 19th century those who participated in the Labour Migration by going to centres of employment in the region, were also admired very much by the adult girls. The girls, especially the *Mwalis* were particularly careful not to involve themselves with old men who they suspected to be already married. A girl would only agree to a marriage proposal from a young man on the advice from her friends and close female relatives.

Boys and girls met one another in many convenient places. They met at dancing centres at night or in the day, at weddings and at other important festivals. It was rare to meet at beer parties because most women did not drink beer, and young women and men were forbidden from drinking beer. Boys took note of the girls they wanted at such ceremonies or functions. Then secretly the boys found out about the girls'

conduct, behaviour, characteristics, and their families status in society. The girls that met their benchmarks were the ones they quickly proposed marriage to. They also investigated the period the girl had stayed in the *nthanganeni* since becoming *Mwali*. *Mukuska* was a term describing a girl who had overstayed in the *nthanganeni*. The reasons for this were many. Either she was ugly, lazy, rude, unco-operative with the young men or her parents were suspected of practising witchcraft. Many young men were not interested in such girls. Any *Mwali* not getting married within three years was considered to have overstayed, and hence, a *Mukuska*. A divorced woman was called *Chiwuya* while a woman who has never been married before for whatever reasons was also called Mukuska.

From the time of the Ngoni domination and the introduction of *nthanganeni*, how did the young men find women to marry? About three to five young men would go to the village of the girls they wanted to marry. Normally, their trip began in the late afternoon to reach the village in the early evening. In the village, they were directed to the *nthanganeni* by the children, or by any person in the village. In fact, elders were always very happy to see young men coming in their village to visit their daughters.

Within a short time of the arrival of the young men, the girls of a particular *nthanganeni* got ready to welcome them. They invited the men in the *nthanganeni* for discussions and general chatting. Girls sat on one side of the mats spread on the floor and men on the other side. Most discussions were done in proverbs, *nthalika*, others in normal sentences.[55] Girls and men fell in love with each other during these visits and chatting sessions in the *nthanganeni*.

The men visited the *nthanganeni* several times before things between the partners were confirmed and other stages initiated, leading to a marriage. Girls never accepted marriage proposals at the first and second visits. If they did, the boys considered them of weak morals. Also, on the first visit, if things were going on well, the men would be allowed to 'sleep' in the *nthanganeni*. In practice they did not sleep. They chatted all night up to early morning. Occasionally the men 'slept a little' or dozed off for a short time. But as a traditional *nthanganeni* rule the men woke up the girls before they left for their homes very early in the morning. However, if the girls were not interested in the men, they ran away from the *nthanganeni* and slept elsewhere in the village that night.

After accepting the marriage proposal, the girl provided the would-be husband the name and other details about her family and of her family intermediary, *thenga* (*nkalamba*). Such information was necessary and essential to the man's family before

[54] After the First World (European) War, the Tumbuka who came back from the threatres of war introduced another very popular dance variously known as Malipenga in Muyombe, Mapenenga in Rumphi and Muganda in Lundazi and Mzimba. The dancers were smartly dressed and to a great extent their dance showed off the dexterity similar to the drills they learned during the war.

[55] Read more about *Nthalika* in a *Nthanganeni* under the title *Marriage* below.

initiating marriage procedures. During the subsequent visits, the girl prepared food for the man, normally, a *chicken*, the traditional dignified relish with *Sima.* It was prepared in accordance with the Tumbuka culture governing traditional marriages.

## MPHALA

*Mphala, a courtyard or forum of justice,* was the centre of men's activities in the village. It was a place where you would see a number of men all the time, from morning to early evening chatting and gossiping while undertaking various tasks. They did their metalsmith work there, they discussed issues of importance there and *Mphala* was also a place where men of the village ate together. From time to time, *Mphala* was also transformed into a *Forum of Justice* where the chief or headman and his advisors discussed all village cases and collective judgements were passed. It was also a *Men's Central Eating Place*, where food from each man's house was brought and eaten by the men present at the *Mphala.* Eating alone at one's house was considered being selfish, or was an act of being a bad person.

Figure 9. *Mphala*

If there was insufficient millet meal [*Sima ya Kambala*], the Tumbuka traditional staple in pre-colonial era, all food cooked was sent to the men only at the *Mphala*. It was not always one or two families that cooked all meals for the *Mphala*. An arrangement was made to share out the cooking responsibilities for the *Mphala*. In most cases, each man's wife in the village was obliged to prepare food for the people (even if her husband was not present) at the *Mphala*. A good cook was highly praised and brought honour to her husband. If a goat was slaughtered, the village shared the meat. The wives were always in a subtle competition for the position of the best cook for the Mphala in the village. However, *a* chicken killed was not shared with others in the village, it was for that particular family because it was too small to be shared. But as a custom, the family that killed the chicken prepared it and sent it as *dignified* relish together with *Sima* to the *Mphala*.

At the *Mphala*, the village men ate the food first, a little from each plate. They then left the rest of the food for the younger men who also left some for the children. Only male children from a specific age ate at the *Mphala*. What they left for the children was called *Makombo*. In many cases the children scrambled for the *Makombo*. The faster ones got more food than the slower ones. The slumberous children left *Mphala* still hungry because they were not fast enough to eat more food within a short time. Tradition did not permit parents (especially mothers) of children who ate from *Mphala* to be given additional food at home, even if they asked for it. That was one way of training them to be vigilant (wakeful) at all times at the *Mphala* and in life. The society did not encourage boys who did things at a leisurely pace. It was quite common that if the 'relish' was very good such as fish, meat or chicken children were left with very little of it, sometimes only with the bones and gravy (sauce).[56]

## CHILYELANO

The *Chilyelano* was an equivalent of *Mphala*, a place where women of the village ate together. Like at the *Mphala*, women cooked food for the *Chilyelano*. It did not matter whether or not her friends had already cooked for the *Mphala*, each married woman took her food to the Mphala and *Chilyelano at all times*. At the *Chilyelano*, the women sat and ate back to back. They got food from the plates in the centre and ate from their hands. Some old men interviewed also claimed to have eaten in this way. The reason for this was that, it was constantly necessary to be on the lookout for wild animals. After eating, the plates (dishes) were cleared away by the children. Only female children from a specific age ate at the *Chilyelano*. As at *Mphala*, children got the left over food from the big women. When the relish was very good such as fish and meat (normaly chicken was relish meant for the husband and the men at the *Mphala* only) the young children were given very little of it, sometimes only the bones and gravy. The elderly women also discussed issues concerning women at this forum.

[56]The term 'relish' does not mean exactly the same thing as in the Western World. Here it means either vegetables, meat, chicken, fish and other foods in this category that always go with *Sima*, the traditional staple of the Tumbuka. The Tumbuka prepare their relish with tomato, onion and spices to produce excellent gravy.

## THE IMPOTENT IN SOCIETY

In every society there are men and women who are barren. They are unable to have biological children of their own. If it is a man who is impotent, it means that for some reasons, he is incapable of making a woman (who is capable of becoming pregnant) conceive, after sleeping with her many times. If it is a woman who is barren, it means she is incapable of conceiving after sleeping with a man proved capable of making a woman pregnant.

If a newly married couple stayed together for over a year without a child of its own, people in the village started talking about it and wondered what the reasons were. The elders in the village investigated the problem and gave the couple appropriate medicine from an expert in this field. If it was a simple problem, the couple quickly got appropriate treatment and, thereafter the wife would conceive. But if the problem was complicated and very difficult to treat, then, the two never had children. Each one of the two would be called *Chumba*. The term *Chumba* is a word describing a barren man or woman. In some cases, the two *Chumbas* could be allowed to end the marriage and try with other partners if that would make each 'new' pair produce its own children. This also confirmed the *one* who *was* the problem in the *initial* marriage.

If the problem was with the man, the elders in his family arranged in such a way that either his brother, cousin or any other close relative would be the one impregnating his wife *without* his knowledge. Normally, this was done after giving the husband medicine to psychologically make him feel convinced that he was the one actually impregnating his wife. This way, the couple had several children without the husband knowing that the children were in fact 'from' his own relative. This was a top secret in the family. It was also cemented by a strict cultural law, which stipulates that, a child born in the house is for the couple of that house no matter how hard another man claims that he was, in reality, the father of the child. In fact, in the traditional circles, if a woman of the *house* or the *biological* father (from outside the *house*) revealed to the public what was going on, the consequences were very serious indeed. Punishment was always *mysterious death* for the one who revealed the top secret of the family. What it meant was that no amount of provocation from the husband would make the wife reveal that the children they had were not his biological children, that someone else was the father. The same was true for the biological father. No amount of provocation from the husband would make the biological father reveal that he was, in fact, the real biological father of his (the impotent man's) children.

If the one who was barren was a woman, the man was asked to marry an additional woman to give the family children. The children born recognised the barren woman as their 'biological' mother as well, and some children lived with her. This is how the society went round the problems of impotence. In this situation, polygamy solved a societal problem. Probably this was one reason why and how polygamy started in the Tumbuka society.

## TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

### *General Education*

In the Tumbuka society, traditional education was very important. It was education for life. It always focused on the development of the society. It made children the real future leaders of the society. It made the children learn what the elders were doing, in order to understand the way the society worked. With such knowledge, the subsequent generations were able to lead the society very well. There was a curriculum for each gender and there was also a curriculum for both sexes.

Boys were taught at an early age how to clear the fields, construct houses and granaries, till the land, sow seeds, weed the fields, harvest the crops and transport them to the granaries. They were also taught how to recognise medicinal trees in the forest, how to identify species of trees that were useful for their fibre in the manufacturing of *Nyanda* and how to identify trees for poles used in the building industry. They were taught how to identify and cut good poles, transport them, and build various types of houses and granaries. Boys learnt how to kill birds and small animals using snares and pit traps respectively. This was part of training in the hunting skills for boys. Through this training the boys were able to learn how to prepare spears, bow and arrows, knives, axes, hoes and other tools and weapons. They also learnt how to treat skins and hides for use in society. The boys were also taught how to identify species of edible fish, and the methods used in catching fish in society.

When the cattle were introduced in the Tumbuka society in the 15$^{th}$ century, the elders taught boys how to care for the animals as they went herding far from the villages. At the *Mphala*, the elderly men taught the boys how to make reed mats and reed baskets. Metalsmiths taught the boys how to forge various items for use in society. Traditional stories and histories were narrated to the young men at the *Mphala* and, this way the children knew their history. It was also through story-telling that the boys were taught appropriate values in society.

Girls were also taught how to till the land, weed the fields, harvest crops and transport them to the granaries. They learnt how to make beer, to pound grain in order to prepare meal (such as millet, rice and sorghum meals), to identify edible wild vegetables and to cook various foods. They also learnt the art of 'pot-making' and cooling drinking water in the clay pots. Fishing was another task they learnt from the big women by accompanying them on the fishing trips. More important for the girls were lessons in childbearing, childcare, traditional family planning methods, familycaring for the husband and the other members of the families.

Respect for the elders in society was extremely important in the education of both girls and boys. Girls were taught to be obedient to their husbands and boys were taught to love their wives and protect them from danger. Boys and girls were taught not to argue with parents and elders in the community, not to *respond* if they were

being scolded [shouted at] by elders, not even to *look in the eyes of an elderly person* when she/he is talking to them. Do not *chew* anything while an elderly person is talking to you. Every elderly woman was their *mother* and could discipline them *anywhere* and when necessary. The same was true for an elderly man. He was their father and could discipline them anywhere and when necessary. This means that the community raised the children together and taught them good values together. The child was therefore a community possession *not* only for the parents. The young people never refused to do tasks assigned to them by any elder. They taught them that, always say, 'Thank you' each time you receive something from anybody, and always receive it with *both* hands and *not* with one hand. When talking to someone [or being talked to] in a house, at a Mphala or in a place where it is possible to sit, especially if it is an elderly person in society, or anyone older than you, always kneel or squat. Do not talk to elders or anyone older than you while walking away from him or her. You have to stop walking and talk to the person or be talked to by the person. Always give way for the elders as they come ahead of you on the same small [bush] path (or road) going in the opposite direction. Always be ready to be called upon to help in the community. Those who respond quickly to elders' calls for help will themselves be assisted by the elders and will live better lives in society. The elders will always pray for them to live longer in society.

***From Birth to Adulthood***

In the Tumbuka society, there were three types of births. There was the ordinary birth, the illigitimate birth and the ominous birth. In every community, there were *Bazamba*, the midwives who assisted the pregnant women to successfully give birth. There were many taboos associated with pregnance and the birth of a child. Ordinarily, prior to adulthood, children did not know how children came about. Parents always said that the mother went to the river and collected the baby from the hippo. This is why in the Tumbuka communities there is still a song to explain the source of children. The song goes like this: *Chigwele zuwula mwana tione! Chigwele zuwula mwana tione! Hippo, bring out a child from water for us to see! Hippo, bring out a child from water for us to see!* Each time children saw a hippo in a river and were themselves on a cliff, they always sang this song, expecting the hippo to show them or give them a baby, the same way it gives the babies to their mothers.

When a child was born, the sex of the child was announced to the members of the village by a shrill or a special *ululation* (*kakunga*). A baby boy was given *one* shrill and a baby girl was given *two* shrills. The girl was given double shrills because according to the society, the girl was more important because she will give birth to other children and will stay in the village with her husband as per the tradition of the matrilineal society. But for the boy, on marriage, he will leave the village for his wife's village. Normally, in matrilinial societies, girls are more important than boys.

The child was kept in the house, in the 'dark' for a week and the mother remained in seclusion, seen only by the *Bazamba* and the parents. The *Bazamba* cut the umbilical

cord using the sharp edged grass, *Lunyezwa.* The cutting of the umbilical cord marked the end of the period of seclusion for the mother. Special care was taken on *who* was to bury the umbilical cord from the baby and where it was to be buried. In all cases, the family had to approve the woman who was to bury the umbilical cord and the site where it was to be buried. A senior woman from the family had to be present at the burial site. The site was a family secret known only by very few senior members of the family. Once the cord fell off, the child was bathed with water mixed with medicine from the *Katope* tree. After that, the baby was tied round the wrists and ankles with small bracelets of grass, *visunda.* From that time there was strict 'separation' between the husband and the wife. They stopped sleeping together for a specific period of time.

From that time, the wife observed certain taboos in the house. In the first one month she was not allowed to cook any food. Culturally, she was considered unclean. However, from the second month, she was allowed to cook but when cooking relish she was not allowed to put salt in it. It was also in this same month that the husband gave presents to the *Bazamba* who assisted the wife to give birth. After accepting the presents, the *Bazamba* left for their homes. The ceremony was called *Kubinga, disengaging them from the mother of the newly born baby.* That was the time the husband 'returned' into his own house. The child was given a name. The husband gave the wife new clothes (bark-cloth).

The grass *visunda* were removed and replaced with beads. At the first moon, the mother held her child towards the moon with the words: 'there is your husband' or 'there is your wife', according to the sex of the child. From birth up to the time of crawling, the child was called *Bonda* or *Nteta.* For the next two years, the couple was not allowed by the tradition of the society to have sex. Probably, that could have been one of the reasons for the practice of *polygamy [locally called Mphali]* among the Tumbuka. The men could not stand the mandatory two years without meeting the wife, hence, they looked for other women to marry to continue life as before, in the two long family planning years.

When teething, it was bad omen if the upper teeth came out first before the lower ones. The lower teeth were expected to come out first before the upper ones. When the upper teeth came out of the gum first, that was bad omen. The mother and the child were given special medicines to avoid future misfortunes to the family and the community.

Generally a child was called *Buza* or *Chivuza* when it began crawling. That was also the stage when training in traditional education started. The child was carefully trained to imitate the socially accepted behaviour displayed by the parents, siblings, and other members of the family and members of the community who came to the house. The *Chivuza* stage ended with the coming out (that is removing or pulling out) of the first milk tooth. That was always accompanied by a ceremony. When the child took out the first tooth after shaking it several times for several days, it was given to the

parents who kept it in the house. On the night of the next new moon, the child was called and told to stand before the parent's house. The tooth was placed in the child's hand. At that moment the child was also told to turn her/his back to the house. While in that position, the child was told to throw the tooth over the shoulder to the roof of the house, uttering the words: 'may the rats in the roof whose teeth are white and sharp give me teeth like theirs'. The ceremony was only for the first tooth. The subsequent teeth were just thrown away on the family ash (garbage) heap without the ceremony.

After the tooth ceremony, the child began a new stage, the stage of *Mwana*, human personality. It was during that stage that the child was given more training and observed a number of 'dos' and 'do not dos'. For example, the child was told:

*(a)* do not use parents' sleeping mat;

*(b)* do not enter parents' bedroom; and

*(c)* do not put your hand into the cooking pot to take food, especially relish. However, a *girl* was *allowed* to do this.

*(d).* no familiarity or closeness with the father. However, the *boy* was *allowed* to do this.

*(e)* do not stand in the doorway, straddle across the threshold or lean upon the door-posts.

The list is endless. From this stage the child learned the general habits of courtesy and politeness and hundreds other good habits.

Usually, for boys, adulthood stage took place between the ages 15 and 18 years. For the girls, the period was much lower, between the ages 11 to 14 years. While the girls had an elaborate public initiation ceremony (*Uzamba*) ushering them into adulthood, the boys did not.

Few people knew about the boy's initiation ceremony. Those who knew included the elderly men in the family and at the *Mphala*. For a boy, the signs of entering adulthood included the following:

*(a)* breaking of the voice (beginning a deep voice).

*(b)* appearance of pimples or blackheads (locally called *nthenko*) on the face.

*(c)* growth of hair on the face (beard and mostache).

*(d)* occasional wet or sweet dreams.

When the boy began experiencing occasional wet dreams he reported to the senior unmarried boys within the village. These reported to the elderly men in the village who also informed the father of the boy. Once that was known, the father arranged that puberty medicines were obtained from appropriate sources and administered to the boy by specialists in the village. Before he got the medicine he was not allowed to

eat relish prepared with salt or speak with any elder in the community. The boy's family gave presents to the men administering the medicine to the boy. Usually, it was a hoe or a bark-cloth. The boy's family gave the boy items that marked his entry into the adulthood stage. They included a bow and arrow, and a spear. There was also a small ceremony whereby the boy was asked to throw the spear or arrow *over* the house. If it fell flat on the ground, that was bad omen as a future husband. But if it stuck in the ground especially if it did so at about 45 degrees angle, that was very good omen as a future husband.

After the ceremony was completed, the boy was introduced to his new peers, the marriageable boys in the village. One of the older boys was attached to him (under his internship) to give him training on what it meant to enter the stage of adulthood. At the first meal with his colleagues, he waited until they all ate the food. He collected the leftovers and threw them away. That was a sign of a person who will be a good 'father of children'. Thereafter, he ate normally together with his peers in the village. The illegitimate birth was the most shameful thing for the family, clan and the village. Such a birth was called *Chiwulila*, an illigitimate occurrence. Normally, the man responsible for such birth was chased away from the village. In such situations, the *Bazamba* even refused to attend to the girl when she went into labour. Only her mother attended to her. That was part of the punishment for the family. The mother and the baby were secluded from the village. They were only readmitted to the village after medicine was administered to the mother. Thereafter, appropriate rituals followed, as explained in the foregoing paragraphs.

Ominous birth was not a shameful birth like the illegitimate birth explained above. It was a dangerous birth forbidden by the society. It was a birth the society could not control, as its circumstances were beyond the powers of the society. It was a matter outside human control. The best example of an ominous birth was the birth of twins, *Banthembwa or Bana banthembwa*. The elder twin is called *Muleza* and the younger one is *Nyuma* (behind). The twins were not killed but specific rituals were performed to protect the society from severe misfortunes due to their arrival in the village.

Soon after the birth of twins, the mother and her babies were quarantined in an 'Isolation House' called *Chisakasa*, that was quickly built outside the village by the husband. The husband also built one *Chisakasa* for himself. Thus, the mother and the twins stayed in one *Chisakasa* and the husband stayed in the other. That was where and how the couple of the twins stayed for some time. When leaving their house in the village, they did not leave using the *usual* door. They left the house using a door that was created by breaking the house directly opposite the usual door. They collected the items from the main house to the *Chisakasa* and began staying there. After a short period of time in the *Visakasa*, the couple returned to the village. That was only after specific rituals were performed. First, *before* the *return* to the village, a pot from the couple's house was broken at the point where two paths meet (*Folk Path*), locally known as *nthowa ndekano*. The mother of the twins with the help of the midwives broke the pot. After the pot-breaking ceremony the couple returned to the village.

Second, *on return* into the village, the mother of the twins cooked *Sima* with *relish* mixed with medicines and the food was shared by all in the village. That was to stop any pending disaster due to the birth of the twins. The couple was given *additional medicine* to completely *purify* and *protect* them from possible future dangers that could come in the family (and community) because of having twins.

A dead twin was buried away from the usual burial ground. It was buried near water. The belief was that twins influenced natural factors like weather, and if buried near water, the territory would receive adequate rainfall, but if buried in a dry place, the kingdom would receive dry weather leading to drought and crop failure, and consequently, famine.

It was not only the *birth* of the child [or twins] that was ominous but also the *positioning* of the child in her mother's womb. Thus, the positioning of the baby as it came out of the mother's womb was also ominous, hence, *names* describing such births and *names of people* who were born in such positions. The following names give good examples of people born in the respective positions: *Mavunika*, forward position; *Fuli*, a posture of scraping the ground with hands; *Mafundi*, a contorted or knotted position; *Malomba*, a supplicating posture of the hands; and *Kagadama [Gadama]* or *Mpawa*, a position where head and face are turned upward. As a custom, for each birth of this kind, medicines were administered to the affected families in the village.

## MABAZGO: TUMBUKA TRADITIONAL CEREMONY

Field interviews on the Tumbuka oral traditions revealed that the Tumbuka had one national traditional ceremony. It was called *Mabazgo* (counting or national census). This was an annual event and as such it was like a yearly national census. The events were always held in the King's village. All preparations were done there. People from all corners of the kindgom came and gathered in the village a day before the celebrations.

On the day of the celebrations after all the final arrangements were done, drumming of the *Kwenje*, the *Funeral Drum* was started. That signified the appearance of the King from the Palace. He came out for everybody to see him. His coming out of the *House* was immediately followed by words of praise in a mixture of Chi-Tumbuka and Chi-Luba languages. The Prime Minister eulogied the King. The praises focused on Mbulalubilo, crossing of the Ruvua, Mweru-wa-Ntipa and Songwe Rivers. After this, the Prime Minister repeated the praises but this time using only Chi-Tumbuka language and focusing on M'nyanjagha.

The subkings (Nyanjaghas) under the M'nyanjagha who came at the Mabazgo celebration were at this time allowed to come in the centre of the arena at the Palace

Figure 10. *Mabazgo Traditional ceremony*

Grounds. The subchiefs included Kapemba, Katongomala, Chiyunga, Jalila, Chama, Chiti, Mgwela, Zolokele, Khutamaji, Longwe, Kholopete, Mphamba, Chagumuka, Chigoma Zimba, Baza Dokowe, Gumba, Luhanga, Kumwenda, Malandula and Kahunoko. The list is endless. From where he sat, the King was the first to address the people. Basically, he thanked the people for coming to the celebrations and also emphasized the importance of the traditions and culture in the kingdom. After the King addressed the people, it was time for the subchiefs [subkings] to address the people. One at a time, each subking narrated the history of how the Tumbuka came from Luba kingdom and settled in the kingdom or chiefdom. Each subking reported to the King and the people on the births, deaths, droughts, floods, rainfall, harvest, successes and major problems in his chiefdom. After the reporting session was over, then came dances of different types performed by many people from the different chiefdoms. The common dances were Mkocho, Mbeleka (wedding dances), *Ulumba* (hunting dance) *Chikweta, Chitivili, Magomba, Kamuchoma (Muchoma), Uzamba* and later in the 16th and18th centuries, *Vilombo* and *Vimbuza* respectively.[57] The new dances, *Vilombo* and *Vimbuza* are discussed in the next chapter. From 1920, Malipenga was another dance for the Tumbuka introduced by those who served in the First European War. During Mabazgo people drank beer, ate different types of food, and enjoyed themselves for few days in the King's village.

Just before the celebrations were over, people gathered again in the main arena. A closing speech marking the end of the *Mabazgo* ceremony was delivered by *Nyanjagha* Jalila. Thereafter, people prepared to leave the following day. The *Mabazgo* was a systematic way of counting people in the kingdom and knowing the positive developments taking place in it. It was also a way for the King to know the problems his people were facing.

## KWENJE: SENGA TRADITIONAL CEREMONY

Oral sources or documented materials on the Senga are silent on the history of Kwenje, the traditional ceremony of the 'Senga' started in 1992.[58] Prior to that date there was no mention of this ceremony although some of the dances performed at the ceremony such as Chiyonga and Vimbuza have been with the Senga since their arrival in Chamanyavyose chiefdom in 1780. The historiography of the Senga history contains no reference to the name Kwenje or any ceremony by that name, an indication that

[57]Chikweta was a dance for both men and women; Chitivili was a dance for men only; Magomba was a dance for both men and women; Kamuchoma or Muchoma was a dance for both men and women. Muganda/Malipenga was a war dance by men only using sticks and traditional trumpets. Uzamba was girls' puberty rite dance exclusively for women.

[58]Data on Kwenje came from the following people who participated in the ceremony and also interviewed chiefs including Senior Chief Kambombo of the Senga: Mr Brevious Bota, Lusaka; Suzgo L.B. Chavula, a student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) in 2000, and Benson Mkandabile, a student at UNZA in 2006. I am thankful to them for the data.

this is indeed a new cultural phenomenon amongst the Senga in Chama district.[59] However, what is important is that it was born in 1992 and it is positively serving the people in the district annually.

What is Kwenje ceremony? Kwenje, *Ng'oma yikulu*, is a term or name given to specific sound obtained by beating or playing a special drum. Thus, Kwenje is both a name for the special drum and specific sound it produces when traditionally beaten by people trained to do so. Such drums are only played for special reasons on exceptional occasions such as when there is death in the community as a result of natural causes or due to an attack by wild animals. It is also used when there is natural disaster like floods or when there is a wild animal disturbing peace in the community; when someone is missing from the village; when installing chiefs; when calling people for special prayers to the ancestors or when a chief is calling people for special meetings in the community. Thus, the drum produces a specific sound that alerts people in the neighbouring areas that there is a problem in the direction of the *kwenje* sound. This is a normal African traditional method of communicating with people to come and assist in solving the problem in the area where the drum is being played. The Senga were and still are no exception in this system of communication.

The Senior Chief Kambombo with the assistance of his senior Village Group Headmen appoints people who constitute the main Kwenje Ceremony Committee responsible for the organization of the event from the start to the end at his headquarters at Bindula (also commonly called Kalinku). This includes mobilizing people to construct temporary grass-fenced enclosure, *Chisebele*, the usual grounds where the event takes place annually; constructing shelters especially where the invited guests will be at the High Table; organizing fundraising activities; sourcing for food and arranging accommodation for invited dignitaries; identifying people to cook the food; arranging security issues and coordinating presentation of speeches and, all the issues of protocol during the event. The Committee chooses the Master of Ceremony to direct the programme throughout the festivals.

All Senga and Tumbuka people, citizens of Chama district are welcome to Kwenje ceremony. However, some people such as government officials are accorded special invitation to the ceremony. Normally, it is a government political figure or any important figure in society that blesses the official opening of the ceremony. Even the President of Zambia can be invited to officially open the ceremony.

The annual Kwenje ceremony centers on four basic activities, namely, different dances for general entertainment and various dances for competition; performance of traditional games where people compete; Kupinga, the climax of the ceremony and, drama for educating people on various issues in society and also for entertainment.

[59]This ceremony seems to have come from the Mabazgo ceremony of the Tumbuka whose land the Senga 'conquered' and occupied from 1780. One of the three drums used at Mabazgo ceremony also produced the Kwenje sound and its functions were the same as those discussed here. Kwenje ceremony, therefore, is a modification of the Mabazgo ceremony.

The venue for Kwenje ceremony is always in Senior Chief Kambombo's chiefdom, and near his Palace called *Linga* at Bindula thirty kilometers north of Chama Boma.[60] The main activities take place in one day but three days are set aside for the whole Kwenje ceremony: the arrival day, the main day of activities and the departure day. The date for the ceremony always falls within the first week of October. On the first day all the other six chiefs arrive at Bindula and are welcome by the host Senior Chief Kambombo at his Place. Many people from all walks of life come to Bindula for the festivals. The shrine (*Kavuba)* for Senior Chief Kambombo is constructed in the main arena by selected elderly men on the first day. This is for the ritual that is performed the following day by the chiefs at the Kavuba. In the Kavuba they put strips of cloth representing all the chiefs who have ruled the territory. Although each chief has his own traditional Kavuba in his chiefdom, for this ceremony only, one Kavuba for the senior chief is prepared and used at the ceremony. However, note that in each Senga chiefdom there is a chief's Kavuba in which there are strips of cloth each representing a chief that ruled the chiefdom.

Dancing is the main characteristic of the first day, the arrival day. The dances that are performed on the first day include the following: Magomba,[61] Malaila, Ulenje, Visangu (also commonly known as *go-go*), Sendemule, Chikweta, Kamtwaya, Chidiwiti (also commonly known as Mary), Vimbuza, Chiyonga (war dance), Vevengu, Kamuchoma and Mangolong'ondo. Dancing and singing goes on until late at night. There are also dances performed by the invited groups from outside Chama district such as *Nyau* (commonly known as *Gule wa M'kulu*) by the Chewa, *Ngoma* war dance by the Ngoni, Muganda by the Tumbuka from Lundazi or Muyombe, and Mbotoska from Malawi. The traditional games performed by elderly men and women include the following: Sikwa, Nguli, Nchuba (commonly known as Nsolo), Kalumbu, Kalimba and Mpyangala.

The second day is the climax of activities. Dancing begins quite early in the morning in the main arena before the arrival of the chiefs and the invited dignitaries for official opening. First, the chiefs assemble at the Palace and discuss territorial issues. At an appropriate time, the chiefs and the guests are invited to go to the main arena. This includes the Guest of Honour. Senior Chief Kambombo, his subchiefs and senior Village Group Headmen come separately at an appropriate time. The Senior Chief Kambombo does not walk from his Palace to the main arena but his subordinates lift him shoulder high from his Linga to the Chisebele amid deafening ululations from the women especially the royal family women, *Fumukazi*. As he approaches the Chisebele, there are sounds of guns being fired, the beating of Kwenje drum, cheering from the crowd and singing of the traditional song, *Wapaona pano Ziwela*. The procession is also accompanied by a wonderful performance by the Chiyonga dancers. Once the Senior Chief is seated, a Chilolo is chosen to pray before the activities start.

[60]The appropriate venue for this ceremony is supposed to be Chimilila a place east of Bindula near Mphalausenga hill where Chibeza Kambombo their original leader who led them from Mwata Yamvo Empire and his Bisa 'settled' before finally settling in the area where Senior Chief Kambombo is today.

[61]Historically, Magomba is a Tumbuka dance.

After a prayer, there are introductions and speeches including that from the Guest of Honour, marking the official opening of the ceremony.

After all is done, dances for competition are performed. Thereafter, traditional games are also performed on competitive basis. The climax of the ceremony on this important day is the playing of the Kwenje drum by an experienced elderly man. As he plays the drum, each different sound or rhythm from the drum is explained in terms of the different occasions for the specific sounds. He plays or beats the drum in such a way as to produce different sounds for each occasion. There is a beat for each of the following: war, emergency, funeral, lost person, human being-eating beast, and for general meeting called by the chief headman. At appropriate time as he explains the beats, the chiefs also simultaneously demonstrate the actions for the occasion of each beat.

After the explanation about the different sounds from the Kwenje drum, the chiefs perform Kupinga. This is a performance showing their pride, strength and victory over the Tumbuka that they found in this area in 1780. This is the time that the chiefs perform a ritual of *Jumping Up and Down* as they move towards the Kavuba. While this is taking place, the chiefs are accompanied by the Chiyonga dancers, performing Chiyonga, the war dance. This is also another time when people cheer and many women ululate. Chief Chibale starts the Kupinga ritual followed by chiefs Lundu, Chifunda, Chikwa, Mulilo and Tembwe. As each chief jumps up and down, his subjects respond by applauding in a traditional way, his eulogy, locally known as *Malumbo*. These are as follows:

| CHIEF | PRAISE NAME (*Malumbo*) |
|---|---|
| Chief Tembwe | Chiseseka. |
| Chief Chikwa | Kango. |
| Chief Chifunda | Teba. |
| Chief Lundu | Ngwezi. |
| Chief Chibale | Nundwe. |
| Chief Mulilo | Vitendwe. |

After the chiefs the next to perform are the senior Village Group Headmen for Senior Chief Kambombo. The first to perform is Mwimba, followed by Mwinikhonde, Kapembe and lastly Katangalika. After they have performed, the next thing is the reading or reciting of the history of the Senga by a person appointed by the Kwenje Ceremony Committee. This reminds the Senga of their history up to the time they entered Chamanyavyose chiefdom in 1780. Thereafter Senior Chief Kambombo makes his speech. After his speech, the chief performs the Kupinga. He is the last one to perform this ritual. It is also done with great pomp and additional ritual aspects. As he starts the Kupinga, there is ululation, cheering, firing of guns and reciting of his *malumbo*, Zamangwe. In addition, as Senior Chief Kambombo performs this ritual, his senior Induna (advisor) using an axe cuts the foot marks of the chief as he jumps up and down. This is a way of showing that the Senior Chief has been there at the Kwenje celebration.

The Kupinga by Senior Chief Kambombo marks the end of the Kwenje ceremony. Normally this takes place at about 17 hours. The senior chief together with his subordinate chiefs and the invited guests, Guest of Honour leave the Chisebele. Those who come from distant places spend a night at Bindula but those who come from the neighbouring areas leave the same evening. However, activities such as dancing, singing and traditional games continue until very late in the night. The following morning, people who came from distant areas left for their respective homes.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# DISEASES AND DANCES OF THE SPIRITUALLY POSSESSED

Before the Tumbuka had any strong contacts with their neighbours, their main dance was *Magomba* followed by *Mkocho, Mbeleka, Ulumba, Chikweta* and *Chitivili. Magomba* was performed as purely an ordinary dance and not a disease-triggered dance or a dance initiated by spirits that possessed the dancer. Therefore, all the disease-triggered dances discussed in the following paragraphs were originally not in any way connected or related to the Tumbuka society. The non-Tumbuka people who came to trade with them were the ones who brought the disease-triggered dances into the Tumbuka society. After some time, the foreign traders settled permanently among the Tumbuka whose women they married. After several generations they became completely *Tumbukalised culturally*. However, by origin they still considered themselves as non-Tumbuka.

Initially, the spirits, the main sources of the dances attacked or possessed only the aliens, traders or not, who settled among the Tumbuka. These were mainly the Chewa, the Bisa, the Senga, the Bemba and the Ngoni.[62] However, later on, the same spirits of the forefathers of these foreigners who were incorporated among the Tumbuka, began attacking the indigenous people, the Tumbuka, as well. May be, this was so because the foreigners were by this time Tumbukas by culture. Many generations had passed since their ancestors settled in *Utumbuka* (M'nyanjagha's kingdom) This is how the Tumbuka became victims of the foreign spirits that initiated the disease-triggered dances we now call *Vilombo, Vimbuza, Fumu za Pasi* and *Vyanusi*

For each disease, the victim of the foreign spirits complained of headache, heartache and at times feeling weak or behaves like a mad person. However, the way each victim reacted to the various pains on attack was extremely important because it was the only way of clearly defining and identifying the particular spiritual disease. It was also the differences in the reactions or behaviours on attack by the disease that enabled the traditional diviner or healer to clearly identify the type of disease that had attacked the victim. With this knowledge, he was able to look for the appropriate medicine to treat the afflicted person.

Since all these diseases were spiritual, they responded very well to the rhythms of their respective drums. When drums were beaten appropriately, they made the possessed spirits in the patient become very quiet and that made the sick get well or healed. Always, the medicine only temporarily *treats* the afflicted person but never *cures* the disease. After some time, the same spirits may come back and attack the same person. These diseases were only treated by diviners or healers, who at one time in the past were themselves patients possessed by the same spirits of the particular diseases, and were treated. Modern medicines fail to treat people suffering from these spiritual diseases.

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[62] It is interesting that the Balowoka traders are not mentioned in the oral traditions.

The sounds of particular drums were a mandatory final course of treatment for these spiritual diseases. Usually, three drums were methodically beaten to bring out a rhythm specifically responding to the type of the disease. Thus, a specific dance was performed by a specific patient responding to a specific drum rhythm that was very different from those of the other patients. The three drums were: *Ng'oma yikulu* (the main big, bass and rhythm drum), *Mphoza* (medium size, lead drum) and *Mbiningu* (small, tenor drum). Drum Specialists who were trained by the community and with the passage of time had acquired a lot of experience were the ones who beat the drums to produce appropriate sounds befitting the illness of a particular patient. Any one of these diseases could attack any adult person at any time, although the most common times were at new moon and at full moon. They could also attack anyone, women, men, young adults, adults and the old.

**FUMU ZA PASI**

Literally, *Fumu za Pasi* means the earthly kings. According to the oral traditions, this disease is caused by the spirits of the dead Bisa or the dead Bemba who were buried in the Tumbuka society many years ago, probably from the 17th century. The disease strikes during the full moon and the afflicted feels headache and heartache. The spirits of *Fumu za Pasi* seem to have been very incensed spirits. This is because in most cases the possessed person behaves like wild creatures. For example, the victim may roar like a lion. The sick may also feel very energised and be able to cultivate a large field alone within a short time. And according to tradition, long time ago, the person attacked by the *Fumu za Pasi* spirits turned into a hyena at night and roamed the forests. By daybreak she/he turned back to human form and returned to the village.

As part of treatment, each time one was possessed by these spirits, she/he ate raw eggs and *muvuba*, a form of very light porridge collected from the pot of boiling *Sima* which is about to be cooked. The *muvuba* was mixed with medicine before drinking it. She/he would also drink fresh blood of a goat killed for this purpose. More important form of treatment was the *Fumu za Pasi* drums qualitatively beaten for the sick who danced appropriately to their rhythms. After dancing, the afflicted became well. The interesting thing is that, immediately the patient began feeling healthy she/he went into a trance and started speaking in tongues using Bisa and Bemba languages, the languages of the spirits that possessed her/him. Almost in all cases, during the normal times when the patient was healthy she/he never spoke the languages she/he spoke during the time of sickness. In fact, the patient was just told by the onlookers that, she/he was speaking in the foreign languages during the time she/he was in a trance. Probably because while in the trance the patient spoke in Bisa and Bemba languages, the disease was associated with the *Fumu za Pasi* spirits, the spirits of the dead Bisa and Bemba people buried long time ago in the Tumbuka society. [63]

[63] In Chi-Bisa and Chi-Bemba languages, they are called *imfumu sha pansi* spirits.

## VILOMBO

*Vilombo* is also a spiritual disease that attacks many Tumbuka people. The afflicted person feels weak and has heartache. He/she gets hallucinations and cries, *hu-hu-hu* like wild creatures. He/she also dreams of *wild creatures*, *Vilombo* (in the Chi-Chewa language), especially snakes, particularly the python. The patient is given traditional medicines and appropriate drums are played for him/her. Together with the power of the medicine the sick person becomes well. Originally, *Vilombo* is a Chewa spiritual disease. The Chewa who came long time ago and lived among the Tumbuka are the ones who brought the *Vilombo* disease. When they died, their spirits began attacking both, the Chewa who were living in the Tumbuka society and the local people, the Tumbuka. This is how the Tumbuka got this spiritual disease, originally from the Chewa, their southern neighbours.

## VYANUSI

*Vyanusi* is a spiritual disease brought among the Tumbuka by the Ngoni. Therefore, this disease only appeared after the arrival and settlement of the Ngoni in the Tumbuka country. The afflicted person, that is, the one possessed by the *vyanusi* spirits feels headache and heartache. He /she also feels like a mad person, and rushes into the bush. In the bush, the patient catches snakes, especially the python, unharmed. While in the bush and in a semi-insane state, the sick person is also endowed with powers to fetch for the appropriate medicine for his/her illness.

The *vyanusi* spirits attack the victims normally during the full moon. In addition to the medicine that she/he fetches alone from the bush, the patient is also subjected to the sounds of the *vyanusi* drums. She/he dances while holding a shield in one hand, and a knobkerry in the other hand. She/he then beats the shield with the knobkerry as she/he dances. The other name for vyanusi is *Ming'omba.*

## VIMBUZA

Many Tumbuka people suffer from *Vimbuza*, a spiritual disease brought into their land long time ago by the Bisa (later known as the Senga) and the Bemba. The person attacked by *vimbuza* spirits (or (*chimbuza* spirit) complains of headache and heartache. Soon thereafter, she/he goes into a trance, and treatment is quickly sought for him/her. Many victims say that *vimbuza* is a disease very similar to a disease called *Chintu chawaka* (an innocent thing) that attacks children. It begins like malaria but soon afterward the eyes revolve in their sockets. In adults, the *Chintu chawaka* disease is called *Vizirisi* (slightly similar to *epilepsy*).

Oral evidence has revealed that as a disease, *vimbuza* appeared in the Tumbuka society after the First European War in 1918, but became more noticeable from 1922. The disease is very similar to the *Fumu za Pasi* disease discussed above. The major difference is that in the case of *vimbuza*, the majority of the victims do not speak in

Figure 11. *Vimbuza dancer*

tongues. Those who do, they do so using Bisa and Bemba languages. Like the *Fumu za Pasi* and as part of treatment the *vimbuza* patient eats *muvuba* mixed with medicines, eats raw eggs, drinks fresh from a goat killed for this purpose, although sometimes fresh blood from a chicken is also taken by the sick person. During this time the afflicted does not eat *Sima*.

The *vimbuza* patient normally knows the medicine for the disease through dreams. Once he/she has dreamed about the medicine, she/he goes into the bush to look for it. Additional medicines include goat's bile. The bile bag (gall bladder) is inflated and the patient wears it round the waist together with the goat's skin. Like the other diseases discussed above, the *vimbuza* patient is finally be treated by dancing to the sounds of the *vimbuza* drums. She/he wears the following for the dance: *Machowa*, that is, bells worn on the legs and strips of goat's skin worn on the body. The patient dances by demonstrating the way a hare runs or dashes in the bush. After dancing, the patient becomes well. The *vimbuza* spirits normally attack their victims during the full moon.

Oral evidence from the victims shows that *vimbuza* can be transmitted from one person to the other through food and water. Since the *vimbuza* patient eats food cooked in his own separate utensils, it is assumed that if such utensils are accidentally mixed with the utensils of non-*vimbuza* patients, the disease is thus transmitted to people who will use the affected utensils. The cooking utensils of the *vimbuza* patients are supposed to be cleaned separately. Sometimes the utensils are accidentally cleaned with communal water at or from the wells or the ponds. This way the disease is transmitted from one family to the other.

An important observation about the *vimbuza* spiritual disease is that once treated the victim must follow strict rules to reduce the frequencies of occurrences. Among such restrictions or taboos are the following:

1. Never eat meat from an animal killed by wild beasts or meat from an animal that died on its own.
2. Never eat groundbeans (*Zgama*).
3. Never eat fish called mudsucker (*Mulamba*).
4. During her menstruation period, a woman should not cross behind the *vimbuza* patient, whether or not at the time of crossing the victim is healthy or not. If she does, her period of menstruation will be extended for two weeks.
5. Never eat meat from the Hare (*Kalulu*).
6. Never eat *Swembe*, a small bird with a very long tail. The *Swembe* birds are always found together large groups.
7. Never touch a newly born baby.
8. Never view a body of a dead person. If done, it can lead to instant death.
9. Take appropriate medicine before eating any new crop. If eaten before medicine is taken, the possessed will fall sick for a week.
10. Once a year, the *Chimbuza* takes appropriate medicines mixed with mushrooms to allow him/her eat mushrooms for the season.
11. Few days after recovery from an attack of *vimbuza* spirits avoid sexual intercourse with any woman including your wife.

Once the above rules are strictly followed, and other prescribed medicines are also taken regularly according to the traditional doctor's instructions, the attacks are greatly minimised, and even these occur after very long intervals. However, note that these days many vimbuza dancers in the urban areas dance for commercial purposes not as a way of treatment.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# FUNERAL, BURIAL AND CLEANSING PRACTICES

*. . . to attempt to . . . describe the ritual of burial is extremely difficult owing to the variety in detail due to the large number of clans now living and intermarrying in our area but not originally belonging to it [the Tumbuka kingdom].*[64]

When death has occurred in a family and some members of the family are not present in the village, those present perform a ritual to protect those far away from misfortune or the ominous happening to them (*chidima ku maso or chisi ku maso, or msiku*). Two axe-heads are struck together in the general direction taken by each of the absent individuals when leaving the village. At night, grass flares are lit and this is followed by spit-praying, which ends with the following words: 'may there be no darkness before your eyes,' *chidima ku maso yayi.*[65] Note that *Chidima ku maso*, darkening of the life of the absent individual, means anything affecting his/her peace without cause. For instance, an outburst of temper or hate; losing employment without cause; being accusing somehing you have not done and so on.

According to the Tumbuka custom, elderly women of the village were the only ones who nursed very sick adult men and women. They were also the only ones who told the people who came to the house to see the patient, the condition of the sick person. If the patient became very sick, the recently married couple was not allowed to enter the house where the patient was. They were also not allowed to come to the hearth of the same house. If they did not oblige to this rule, they would kill the patient by transmitting a disease called *Vumbila*. The disease is a more severe type of *Mdulo*. It causes wooping cough and serious chest pains.

Death was announced to important relatives and guardians in the family. The announcement, *Nduvyo* was done by carrying a chicken to give to the person you are informing about the death that has ccurred in the family. The way in which the announcement was made determined to a large extent the type of the relationship that existed between the members of the whole clan and the family of the deceased person being informed about the death. If *nduvyo* was just by word of mouth, it meant that the relationship was not as good as it should be. However, if a chicken was used in the *Nduvyo*, it meant that the relationship was very good.

In the undistorted Tumbuka tradition, when a person died, only women wailed and not men. The male chief mourner could sob a bit if he failed to contain the grief. That was all he could do. When relatives came from near or distant places, as they approached the village, women began wailing. When the women in the funeral house

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[64]Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, p.166.

[65]The coffin as we know it today never existed among the Tumbuka. Bodies were carefully wrapped or put in specially prepared reed-mats. This is what was lowered in the grave and buried.

heard them, they quickly responded or 'received' them by wailing as well. That became *Chitengelo*, general wailing at the funeral house. As a rule, men gathered outside while women assembled inside the funeral house. After the wailing subsided, the male guardians who came from far confered with their counterparts to discuss the manner in which the deceased died and the person who bewitched him/her, *uyo wamulowa.* Only death of very old people was considered 'natural death', the rest were almost always considered to have been due to witchcraft. Normally, burial took place the same day or the following day. Sometimes, they waited for more relatives up to three days before burial took place. During the mourning period, mourners slept at the funeral house, *chivumbi.* Women slept inside the funeral house while the men slept outside in a roofless shelter. All mourners slept either on leaves or on grass.

As a rule, burial had to be witnessed by key guardians from the wife's and the husband's families. Failure to observe this rule, serious troubles erupted. The family that did it alone was heavily fined and even accussed of being responsible for the death of the deceased person. This was worse at the death of a woman. The payments given to the grieved family were for consoling them, *Kuphepiska.*

The burial procedures before the *actual* burial followed a proper order, *dongosolo.* First, members of the family prepared the body (*kunozga chitanda*) for burial. How was this done? They organised reed mat, bark-cloth and oil. The bark-cloth was laid on the mat. The body was washed and after that it was anointed with the oil and then clothed in the deceased own clothes. The preparation stage was done either in the deceased house or at the grave. Once the body was clothed it was put on the bark-cloth laid on the mat. The body was wrapped and tied in the mat. This was again tied to the poles for suport and it also made it easy to carry the body from the village to the graveyard. The people who by tradition were allowed to prepare the body for burial included the following: grandchildren, *Bazukulu*, males or female depending on the gender of the dead person; close relatives, *bene na bene* and *ordinary* people of the village. After the burial the *ordinary* people were later highly honoured by the relatives of the deceased person.

The grandchildren carried the coffin from the house to the graveyard. The *actual* grave (*trench* or *ditch*) where the body is laid down has three names. It is called *Nyumba,* house. It is also called *Dindi or Muwunda*, a mound. The graveyard or cemetry is called *Malalo* or *Mawono*, the sleeping place or a place where you lie down. At the graveyard, there were four groups of people. There were the *Bachimbwi*, the hyaenas, whose responsibility was to dig the grave and shovel the soil. The other group was that of the key relatives, who remained seated watching the process of digging by the *bachimbwi*. The third group was that of the *Bazukulu*, whose task was to bring the body to the graveyard and lower it into the grave (house) properly. The fourth group was that of the *ordinary* people from the village and the neighbouring communities.

When the grave was ready, the *Bazukulu* lowered the coffin into it.[66] When preparing the body at the house, it was laid on its right hand side. In the grave, it faced to the north and its head to the east, the legs to the west. The Tumbuka came from Luba kingdom and reached their present area using the northern route, hence, the custom to face the north. They came in their present land from the east (in Kalonga), hence, the reason for the head facing east, and in that position, the legs (feet) will automatically face the west. A number of personal items of the deceased were laid besides the coffin in the grave. They included clothes, plates and baskets. They were meant for use in the other world where he/she was going. Before filling the grave with soil, each one of the people present cast cold ashes (*Vyoto* or *Makala!*) into the grave. The significance of this was that it protected the people from having nightmares afterward. After that was done, the *Bachimbwi* filled the grave with soil until the mound, *dindi*, was created. If the buried person was a good farmer, seeds were poured on the mound. If he was a good hunter, a sign to that effect was erected or left on the mound. They believed that he/she would continue with the same activity in the other world.

After burial, they all went to the stream to wash. Each gender washed separately, a distance from each other. First, the grandchildren washed, then they poured water on each of the other mourners, one at a time. Serious washing was by those who touched the body or dug the grave. Others just washed their hands. The majority of the mourners washed to avoid death repeatedly coming to the village. Additionally, those who touched the body washed to remove dirt, *likho/malikho* from their bodies.

Before entering the village, the mourners from the stream underwent a special ritual to enable them start a new life in the village. A traditional doctor, *Ng'anga*, was called to perform the ritual. He/she prepared a small fire on the path to the village. He/she threw his/her medicine in the fire and made each mourner leap over the medicine flame, beginning with the grandchildren and ending with the ordinary mourners. Also, the *ng'anga* prepared a cold gruel, *M'timpwa* [similar to *vimphotwa*!] a concoction of medicine, fermented millet (*chilungo*) and water. The mixture was carefully prepared in a sifting basket, *Luselo*. Each mourner was made to drink a bit of the *M'timpwa*. The ritual was called *Ndumo*. It marked the beginning of a 'new' life in the village.

In the village, all members of the bereaved family slept at *chivumbi*. The *Bazukulu* and *Bachimbwi* slept in a separate place from the rest of the mourners. From that time, they were 'taboo', *ba m'zilo*. They ate food and drank beer on their own. Anyone stepping on the feet of one or all of these 'special' people or passing behind their place was fined a chicken. Food for the *chivumbi* came from many families in the village. That was one way of comforting the bereaved family so that they could quickly forget the death of their beloved one. *Chivumbi* was only abandoned after most relatives from distant places had visited the funeral house and conferred with the bereaved

[66]Here the term *flour* means the *millet meal* [powder] from finger millet that was the staple in the Kingdom during the pre-colonial era. Today, the main staple in Zambia is Mealie meal [powder] from maize.

members of the family. It could take days or weeks. The members of the bereaved family were easily identified in the village because of what they wore for the occasion. Men and women wore bark-cloth strips as broad head-bands or as string necklaces.

A day before the mourners dispersed from chivumbi, there were many activities at the funeral house. They included dancing, eating various foods and drinking plenty of beer. Professional dancers, *vilimbi vya gule,* performed to their best and were given presents such as chickens, goats, food, cloth and beer. In the morning, the members of the family and some friends of the deceased person went to the graveyard with flour (millet meal) and beer. They dug a small hole at the head of the deceased grave and poured flour and beer and performed 'spit-praying', before returning to the village. If the deceased was a small person, the hair-cutting session took place the same morning before members of the family dispersed to their respective homes.

However, if the deceased was an adult, the hair-cutting ritual did not take place on that day. They waited for one year before cutting the hair on the heads, of close members of the family. As long as the hair was not cut, no one affected was allowed either to have marital relations or to marry during that 'closed' period. If it was proved that some members of the family broke this regulation, the penalty was a heavy fine.

On the day of cutting the hair, all affected members of the family came back to the funeral house and took part in the hair-cutting ritual. That was also a time of dancing, eating and drinking. The dance was called *Gule wa sembe* or *Gule wa masisi.* At this feastival, friends of the dead person brought various crops, such as beans, millet and groundnuts and poured them on the ground in the dancing arena for people to tread on. That was a way of mourning their departed colleague. When everything ended, members of the family together with some of the friends of the departed colleague went to the graveyard with beer and flour. They prayed at his grave, inviting his spirit to come home and see his *mbumba,* family. On their trip back to the village, they poured *flour* on the path.[67] The *beer [locally called Moba]* was put in the deceased person's principal house. If the mice scattered the *flour* on the path and the *beer* rose and spilled, they concluded that the dead person's spirit had *eaten* the flour or had *drunk* the beer.

As explained earlier, if it was a husband who died, the widow (*Chokolo*) chose a member from the late husband's family to marry her. She was not allowed to mention a name of an outsider, *muntu wa waka,* to marry her. That marriage was in actual fact, an inheritance of the widow (*Kupyana Chokolo*) and is still in practice among the Tumbuka but this time on a smaller scale. If the widow accepted to be married or inherited (or a widower agreed to marry another woman from his late wife's family) by a member of the family, the *cleansing process [Ku wamya, Ku munozga]* was initiated. The two were asked to have sexual intercourse as a way of cleansing the widow/widower. However, today this practice is not done because of the prevalence of many sexually transmitted diseases including the dreaded HIV-AIDS. What they do is only sprinkle mealie meal on the widow/widower and cut his/her hair.

[67] Read Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi*, passim.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# RELIGION: KAVUBA AND SPIRIT SPIT-PRAYING

Religion is an organised system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices and worship that centre on one Supreme God. The Tumbuka were and still are monotheistic, that is to say, they acknowledge only one true God. They do this by following a religion of *Kavuba,* shrine (*Tuvuba*, shrines) and spirit spit-praying (*ku khwelula*) because it was and still is part of the heritage of their culture. For the Tumbuka, and it is believed, other societies too, religion gives a feeling of security because they believe that a divine power watches over them. They ask the divine power for help and protection. The same religion promises salvation and happiness in a life after death. Religion also gives a sense of individual fulfilment and meaning to life.

The Tumbuka believed in one God, *Chiuta*. But they could only reach their God through the intermediaries, the spirits (*Mizimu*) of their dead relatives (*Vibanda*). God could, therefore, not be reached directly. Their prayers had to go to God through the spirits of their dead relatives. These spirits lived in *heaven* and were in constant *contact* with them and their God.

## KAVUBA AND SPIT PRAYING

A *Kavuba* was equivalent to a church today where Christians worship or any other place where those who believe in the supreme God congregate to worship. A *Kavuba* was, therefore, a small hut at which the Tumbuka prayed to their God through the spirits of their dead relatives. It was built of the poles from the *Musolo* trees only and under the *Musolo* tree. This is a very sacred tree among the Tumbuka. The *Kavuba* was built under the *Musolo* tree because they believed that the spirits of their dead relatives were living under the roots of this tree. It was also believed that in the absence of the *Kavuba,* the spirit lived in the forests. Therefore, the *Kavuba* was meant to be a home for the homeless spirits. The spirits came from heaven and temporarily *lived* in the *Tuvuba* built for them by the members of their *living* families. Sometimes they came from heaven and visited (or lived in) *Tuvuba* in times of worship. If *Tuvuba* were not built, the spirits became angry and troubled the people in the family, clan or the society. They were angry because they had no place where to 'live'.

A family could have several *Tuvuba* for the spirits of the various dead relatives. But there was always one *Kavuba* for each chief that died and each *Kavuba* was the responsibility of each family that built it. Sometimes, each family or clan built its own *family* or *clan Kavuba.* There were no people guarding *Tuvuba*. These were and still are sacred places and nobody went there to vandalise them.

Each time a family or a community faced problems, people went to their respective *Tuvuba.* Generally, people prayed at *Kavuba* in times of natural calamities such as famine, drought, floods, locusts, diseases, and when dangerous wild animals terrorised them.

Occasionally, the people consulted the traditional doctor/healer (*Ng'anga*) to find out the causes of the problems facing them. Normally, the traditional doctor/healer told them that the spirits of their various dead relatives were angry for one reason or the other. On hearing this, the people prepared themselves and went to their respective *Tuvuba*. Note that a traditional doctor/healer was not significant in this religion. The people consulted him/her only when it was very necessary to do so, or just as a formality. Many times people prayed at their *Tuvuba* without prior consultations with the traditional doctors/healers.

The head of the family or clan was the leader of the *Kavuba* of that family or clan. The head of the family or clan was also the leader of the spit-prayers. He prayed on their behalf and in their presence at the *Kavuba*.

The people brought offerings (sacrifices) to the *Kavuba* for the spirits of their dead relatives dwelling in them to eat or drink. They included, cooked liver of any edible animal, traditional beer carried in traditional clay pot, cooked meat, new crops and other foods. The Tumbuka believed that whatever offerings were tampered with or were missing from the *Kavuba* the following morning were actually eaten or drunk by the spirits. This was also a sign that they had appropriately appeased their spirits and would in turn have their requests positively answered. Indeed, during the oral interview, we were told that, if their ancestors prayed that way, they got what they wanted. For example, if they prayed for rain, it could rain before they even reached the village from the *Kavuba*. If they prayed for the wild beast to stop terrorising them at night, the same day there would be peace at night. If they prayed for meat, they would find one big animal dead on its own in the bush near to their village the same day or a few days afterward, or hunters would have unusual luck and kill many animals. Their God was responding to their requests through their intermediaries, the spirits of their dead relatives

At the *Kavuba*, the people who prayed on behalf of those present practised what has come to be known as 'spirit spit-praying' (*ku khwelula*). They spat some small amounts of saliva as they prayed (or recited some words) to their ancestors' spirits. For example, they would say: 'Our ancestor . . . we request you to come into this *Kavuba* that we have built for you . . . eradicate diseases from our villages . . . protect us from the wild animals troubling us . . . bless us all'.

The Tumbuka were not idol worshippers as some scholars thought.[5] They did not pray to the various winds or rain winds such as *Chikang'ombe* (north/northeast wind/rains), *M'nyimbili* (northwest winds/rains), *Thunga* (east winds/rains) and *M'zambwe* (west winds/rains). They also did not worship idols such as pools of water, trees, rocks or hills and mountains. They believed in God who could only be reached through their ancestors' spirits.

What we have discussed in this chapter is not always practised because of the introduction of Christianity (*Ekeleziya*) and western culture in the Tumbuka society, and we believe the same is true in the other societies in Africa. Nowadays worship (*Chisopo*) is done according to the Christian culture.

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